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## The nature and role of social presence in audiographic, synchronous online language learning contexts

### Thesis

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**The nature and role of social presence in  
audiographic, synchronous online language  
learning contexts**

**DOCTOR of EDUCATION (EdD)**

**Technology Enhanced Learning**

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# **Abstract**

This study explores social presence (SP) and its nature and role in online language tutorials at the Open University. My research questions ask how SP is perceived to influence language learning and what factors impact on the projection of SP from the learner perspective. I also ask if these perceptions are evidenced through observed aspects of tutor and learner participation.

Within the field of computer-mediated communication (CMC), SP theory has evolved from a view of SP as a product of a technological medium to an understanding of the impact of social interaction on its development and projection. Research studies in CMC highlight the importance of SP but, as yet, the links between SP and online language learning have not been fully explored.

Whereas socio-cultural theory provides a framework for my understanding of the importance of social interaction in learning, I draw on the field of multimodality to gain insight into the meaning-making potential of multimodal environments. I also draw on the Community of Inquiry framework (Garrison et al., 2000) to provide both a theory and methodology for my study of SP.

My principal finding is that positive SP is important in online language learning, not only to support and facilitate language interaction but also as a necessary aspect of communication in language learning. However, the generation and impact of SP are contingent upon factors related to individual learner differences and emotional responses, and to its interplay with teaching presence and 'language learning presence', which is a new concept. SP must always be understood in relation to



the primary mediating variables of the subject area and online learning environment.

The pedagogical relevance of my study is located in insights into the nature and role of SP in online language learning, derived from an integrated methodology, involving both student perspectives and my observations of online interaction.

For Alexandra, Francesca and Maya Alejandra



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## **Acronyms used in this thesis**

CMC	Computer-Mediated Communication
CALL	Computer- Assisted Language Learning
CoI	Community of Inquiry
CMCL	Computer-Mediated Communication for Language Learning
CP	Cognitive Presence
LLP	Language Learning Presence
LSP	Learner Social Presence
SCMCL	Synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication for Language Learning
SCT	Socio-Cultural Theory
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SP	Social Presence
TL	Target Language
TP	Teaching Presence
TSP	Teacher Social Presence

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

The field of computer-mediated communication (CMC) is now well-established in distance and online learning. Advances in technology have led to the development of a range of communication platforms which have facilitated the development of online tuition across subject areas and in different contexts. In general, online tuition is delivered through asynchronous or synchronous means or a combination of the two. Learners studying asynchronously are likely to communicate via forums, blogs, wikis or messaging. Synchronous learning, on the other hand, takes place in real time and involves the use of a variety of audio and visual online applications, including voice-based technology.

There has been a long history of the use of technology in language learning. Early computer assisted language learning (CALL) involved the use of computers as an add-on to classroom interaction where students could work independently to practise language exercises, gaining immediate feedback (Beatty, 2013). More recent developments in CALL have used the emergence of new technologies to enhance or replace classroom language teaching (Cerezo et al., 2014). Technological advances have also contributed to the development of CALL-based research which has expanded considerably since Warschauer's (1996) categorisation of CALL into historical phases and Levy's (1997) seminal text.

A relatively recent development in the field of CMC is computer-mediated communication for language learning (CMCL). In terms of its focus on language learning, CMCL can be regarded as an off-shoot of CALL (Lamy and Hampel, 2007). However, CMCL tends to draw on the research theories and methodologies of the field of CMC, which are well-established in distance education. CALL

research, on the other hand, draws more on second language acquisition (SLA) research and theory, and is not specific to distance environments. This study is grounded in the field of CMCL but also draws on SLA theory and research. As such, it aims to make a contribution to bridging the gap identified by White (2003) in research which synthesises findings from both fields.

## 1.1 The study context

The Open University is the leading distance learning provider in the UK. It is also a key innovator of online learning technology. At the Open University (UK), online or face to face tutorials are offered as part of language studies at all levels. During these tutorials, the emphasis is usually on oral practice of structures and functions and communicative interaction in the target language (TL). Use of the TL as the medium of instruction is routine, although English is also used at lower levels.

When tutorials are delivered online, an audiographic synchronous online platform is employed, which was *ElluminateLive* at the start of my research. This platform has now been replaced by *OULive*, which is comparable to *ElluminateLive* in that it is voice-based and therefore does not show moving images of participants. It also offers similar online tools to *ElluminateLive*, which I describe in detail in section 3.2.2 of this thesis. In my role as Staff Tutor for languages<sup>1</sup> at the Open University, I am required to routinely observe online and face to face tutorials as part of staff development and quality assurance processes.

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<sup>1</sup> A 'staff tutor' is responsible for the management and staff development of associate lecturers in the Open University (UK).

## 1.2 Research focus

The focus of my study is the nature and role of social presence (SP) within *IlluminateLive* and the implications for language learning. By SP, I refer to social and affective aspects of online interaction, which I am interested in exploring in this thesis. In CMC contexts, where interaction is mediated by online technology and where there is an absence of body language cues, the importance of SP has been highlighted in terms of mitigating against feelings of distance, which may be provoked in such contexts, and which may impact on student satisfaction and retention (Rienties & Alden Rivers, 2014).

Within the field of CMC, there is a well-established body of literature on SP, to be explored in Chapter 2. Much of this literature is, however, based on text-based, asynchronous communication and is, therefore, not specific to synchronous language learning contexts. By locating my study in a synchronous language learning context, I aim to provide a useful contribution to an understanding of SP within CMCL.

My interest in SP originated from an earlier Master's degree in Counselling and Psychotherapy and ten years of experience as a practising counsellor. This experience convinced me of the importance of SP in any context for the building of relationships and for meaningful interpersonal interaction. In addition, personal responses to online meetings at the Open University in my role as Staff Tutor for languages stimulated my interest in SP. As a language educator, all my professional experience was located in face to face contexts prior to joining the Open University. When I first worked in *IlluminateLive*, I found its audiographic nature, with the absence of body language cues, to impact negatively on my own

social presence and ability to communicate. I became interested in how adult language learners would perceive language learning within this medium and wondered what the impact of its audiographic nature might be on forms of interaction.

What I originally expected to find was that the lack of visual cues, and the lack of physical presence of learners would produce forms of interaction which would be in some ways impoverished and limiting with respect to language learning. This is a recognised position in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) research (Lamy & Hampel, 2007). However, my observations of *ElluminateLive* tutorials in my role of Staff Tutor, challenged this earlier hypothesis. What became clear from these observations was that interaction was sometimes rich in ways which related to specific aspects of the medium and the communication processes within that medium. I therefore set out to study SP as it is experienced and communicated by learners in online *ElluminateLive* tutorials, starting from the premise that it would be a significant variable in online language learning.

## 1.3 Research questions

My thesis will explore the following research questions derived from my examination of the literature in Chapter 2:

**Q1. According to the perceptions of learners, how and to what extent do aspects of SP influence language learning presence (LLP)<sup>2</sup> in online language tutorials?**

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<sup>2</sup> This is a new concept which I define in Chapter 2, section 2.4.2

**Q1.1** *How and to what extent do aspects of the SP of the individual influence their ability to learn and practise language in online language tutorials?*

**Q1.2** *How and to what extent do aspects of the SP of other learners influence the ability to learn and practise the language of both the individual learner and the group in online language tutorials?*

**Q1.3** *How and to what extent do aspects of the SP of the tutor influence the ability to learn and practise the language of both the individual learner and the group in online language tutorials?*

**Q2. According to the perceptions of learners, what factors influence the projection<sup>3</sup> of SP in online language tutorials?**

**Q2.1** *How and to what extent might these factors be related to individual responses to and in the online environment?*

**Q2.2** *How and to what extent might these factors be related to the uses of the tools of the online environment?*

**Q2.3** *How and to what extent might these factors be related to other aspects of the online environment?*

**Q3. Is there evidence from online observations that learner perceptions of the nature and role of SP relate to observed aspects of the participation of tutor and learners in the online setting?**

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<sup>3</sup> The verbs 'to project' and 'projected' relate to the 'projection' of SP. The phrase 'projection of SP' is synonymous with 'communication of SP'. I use both phrases interchangeably in this thesis.



## **1.4 Central argument**

My central argument is that SP is a complex phenomenon, which is both subjective and constantly co-constructed in online interaction by participants. However, perceptions of SP and its observable manifestations need to be studied in relation to a specific socio-cultural learning context. Both the learning environment and the subject area will mediate the projection of SP and the way it is experienced when communicated by both self and others. Within this environment, other forms of mediation will also operate but they must always be understood in relation to what I consider to be two primary mediating variables: subject area and the online learning environment.

## **1.5 Thesis structure**

I situate my research within a socio-cultural framework and this is described and justified in Chapter 2. In Chapter 2, I also review the literature on SP and draw on research and theory from the fields of CMC, CMCL, SLA and multimodality. Such an interdisciplinary approach is warranted by the exploration of a phenomenon which is rooted in CMC, is specifically related to language learning and is contextualised within an online multimodal environment. Finally, I describe and justify the use of an adapted version of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison et al., 2000) as both a theoretical backcloth and methodological tool for the analysis of data.

Chapter 3 describes the methods with which I approach my research and explicates the epistemological and ontological frameworks of my study. Within an overarching qualitative methodology, I use a mixed-methods approach to investigate my research questions. Questionnaires and interviews are employed to

gather data on student perceptions of SP, and data from online tutorial observations is used to triangulate these perceptions.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present and analyse the findings of my research. Chapter 4 presents the findings of survey data. Chapter 5 extends and builds on these findings by reporting data derived from interviews with learners. Chapter 6 triangulates and expands on data from the previous two chapters by presenting and analysing the results of online tutorial observations.

In Chapter 7, I discuss my findings in relation to some of the research and theories explored in Chapter 2. In addition, I relate my findings to studies carried out using the Col framework (Garrison et al., 2000) and re-assess the applicability of this framework to synchronous online language learning. Finally, in Chapter 8, I revisit my research questions before discussing the implications of my research for the fields of CMC and CMCL and for my professional practice. I also present my conclusions and recommendations.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

The importance of SP in the fields of CMC and CMCL<sup>4</sup> has been variously described in terms of increasing student satisfaction (Copley Cobb, 2009), promoting collaborative learning and participation (Hauck & Warnecke, 2013; Kehrwald, 2010; Kehrwald, 2008; Ubon & Kimble, 2004), facilitating cognitive learning (Garrison et al., 2000) and impacting positively on student retention (Boston et al., 2011). SP is therefore regarded as a positive phenomenon but the extent and nature of its impact on synchronous computer-mediated communication for language learning (SCMCL) remains under-explored.

In this chapter, I explore theories and research studies in the fields of SLA and multimodality, CMC and CMCL in order to derive the research questions which will guide my study. I challenge the notion that SP is inherently positive and argue that it needs to be studied within specific socio-cultural and technological contexts and within a particular subject area. My review of the literature provides insights into the nature of online language learning and the roles of participants. It also highlights the essential role of mediation<sup>5</sup> by the technological environment and its affordances<sup>6</sup> and suggests that SP will be found to impact upon and be impacted upon by these factors. The socio-cultural and constructivist orientation of this thesis reflects my acknowledgement of the importance of its socio-cultural and technological context and of the processes of interaction which determine how language is learnt within this setting. By 'constructivist', I refer to Vygotskian

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<sup>4</sup> CMCL refers to both synchronous and asynchronous online language learning. Where synchronous language learning is differentiated from asynchronous language learning, I use the acronym SCMCL.

<sup>5</sup> 'Mediation' is discussed and defined in Section 2.1.2

<sup>6</sup> 'Affordances' is defined in Section 3.2.2

social-constructivist theory, which posits that learners 'construct their knowledge through their interaction with their social and physical environment and by reflecting on their experiences' (Simina and Hamel, 2005, p.218).

This chapter is divided into five sections. In the first section, I develop the theoretical framework of my study in terms of:

- a)** SLA theories of language learning. This is necessary in order to ground my research in a language learning theoretical framework.
- b)** Research on social and affective aspects of SLA. In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I state that my research on SP will focus upon social and affective aspects of interaction. The theories and research studies discussed in this sub-section do not make specific reference to SP. However, their relevance lies in their focus on social and affective interaction.
- c)** The theory and research of multimodality, drawing on social semiotics. This provides a framework for an understanding of how meanings are articulated within the multimodal environment within which my research is situated.

With respect to all three areas listed above, I discuss face to face theories where they are relevant to online language learning research.

In section 2.2, I focus on SP and on the development of SP theory. I present and justify, in detail, two definitions of SP prior to discussing the research findings of SP studies in both synchronous and asynchronous CMC and CMCL contexts (section 2.3). In the fourth section of this chapter, I return to the field of CMC and introduce the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model of online learning (Garrison et al., 2000). I discuss the applicability of the model to my own study and present an alternative version which I propose to use as a conceptual framework to

understand the impact of SP on what I call 'language learning presence' in an SCMCL context. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a brief summary (section 2.5).

## **2.1 From SLA theories to multimodality**

As the subject of my research is the nature and role of SP in a multimodal online language learning environment, in this section, I develop my theoretical framework by drawing firstly on SLA theory and research and then on that of multimodality. Within the field of SLA I discuss two aspects which are of relevance to my research focus. These are a) interaction and b) social and affective factors. I then turn to the field of multimodality to explicate my understanding of communication in multimodal environments. Although SLA and multimodal theories have not originated in online contexts, they provide useful insights when extended to such contexts.

### **2.1.1 Cognitive-interactionist theories of interaction**

The notion of 'interaction' is a key concept in SLA but is subject to different definitions according to the theoretical framework adopted. It was originally interpreted as a condition under which cognitive processes take place. Krashen's input hypothesis (1985), Long's interaction hypothesis (1985) and Swain's output hypothesis (1985) described the ways in which a second language was acquired or became 'intake' (Schmidt, 1990).

Krashen's theory was influenced by findings from both first and second language (L1 and L2) acquisition research and L2 research into the existence of a universal order of acquisition. He hypothesised that 'acquisition' and 'learning' were two separate processes represented in separate knowledge stores within the mind.

‘Learning’ took place when the learner explicitly focused on the linguistic system. ‘Acquisition’, on the other hand, was an implicit, natural process which occurred when the learner was exposed to meaningful language, pitched just beyond their language level, i.e. ‘roughly tuned comprehensible input’. Krashen’s input hypothesis, in summary, claimed that learnt knowledge had limited applicability to the SLA process. ‘Learning’ could not become ‘acquisition’ because there was no interface between the two knowledge stores, and its use was limited to that of a monitor to edit ‘acquired’ language.

Criticisms of Krashen’s theory have centered around the lack of focus on interactive processes and on the potential role of linguistic output. Long’s (1996; 1985) interaction hypothesis emphasized the importance of interaction in the L2 acquisition process. Long proposed that meaning is negotiated by learners in the form of clarification checks, for example, and this leads to the modification of input in interaction which, in turn, facilitates acquisition. For Long, therefore, Krashen’s assertion that comprehensible input is sufficient to trigger L2 acquisition was inadequate for an understanding of L2 acquisition.

Additionally, the role of linguistic output was also proposed as a significant factor in SLA. Swain’s (1985) ‘output hypothesis’ claimed that output will facilitate L2 acquisition when the learner is forced to monitor and refine it. The learner’s perception that this is necessary may depend upon corrective feedback, for example, or their attempts to refine utterances which have not been successful in communication. With Swain’s extension of SLA theory to the role of linguistic output, a new role for language production was therefore established.

The ideas summarized briefly in this section are examples of cognitive-interactionist theories, i.e. theories which explored what were thought to be universal processes of language learning triggered by interrelations between cognition and interaction. However, dissatisfaction with the lack of research into the social aspects of language learning, led to a shift in research, which had already occurred in a number of other social sciences. This change in research perspective, referred to by Block (2003) as 'the social turn' in SLA, involved recognition of the fundamentally social nature of SLA.

Within social theories of SLA, the notion of interaction is used within different theoretical and methodological frameworks, i.e. conversation analysis, systemic functional linguistics and socio-cultural theory (SCT) which focus on different interactional processes and features. The overarching theoretical framework of this thesis lies within SCT and in the following section, I discuss interaction as it is conceptualized within SCT.

### **2.1.2 Socio-cultural theories of interaction**

In both cognitive interactionist and social interactionist theory the internalization of new language is seen as dependent upon input and output processes. However, whereas cognitive theories emphasise the universality of cognitive processes, socio-cultural theories based on the work of Vygotsky (1978), stipulate that language learning is situated within social interaction and in social contexts, thereby connecting cognitive development inextricably to social aspects.

Lantolf (2006; 2000) extended Vygotskian (1978) socio-cultural theory to explicate aspects of second language interaction. Within a socio-cultural paradigm, language learning is seen to be always mediated by the socio-cultural context

(Lantolf, 2006) and in contrast to cognitive theories of SLA, socio-cultural theories emphasise that, 'any knowledge and any capacity to engage in regulated activity appears always first at the social, interpersonal level during activity with others and only later can be seen to operate also at the psychological and intrapersonal level' (Ortega, 2009, p.224). This necessarily involves assistance from others, i.e. collaboration with teachers or with higher level language learners in order for the gap to be breached between what is known and what is to be learnt. This gap is known as the 'zone of proximal development' in SCT (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86).

Recently, researchers have extended socio-cultural theories of interaction to online learning environments. It was Chapelle (2003), who originally called for the application of interactionist SLA theories to CALL, but she has been criticized for underestimating the role of socio-cultural aspects, particularly in the face of rapidly evolving technologies (Kern, 2006). On the other hand, Kern (2006, p.187), emphasises the importance of socio-cultural theories in online environments in their focus on 'the social and cultural situatedness of learner activity, learners' agency in co-constructing meanings (as well as their own roles), and the importance of mediation by tools and signs'.

Socio-cultural 'mediation' signifies the shaping of experience (Lamy and Hampel, 2007), which is always, necessarily, transformative (Thorne, 2005; Wertsch, 2002). The nature of this transformation will depend on the specific technological medium and its tools (Kern, 2014). However, Kern (2014), argues that it will also depend on other aspects of the socio-cultural, technological context, including language, which as Lamy and Hampel (2007, p.33) state is, 'the main mediational tool in all human social learning'. For Kern (2014, p.343) people and objects are also 'mediators' with which and through which learners interact. This reflects a



broader understanding of online mediation, by placing emphasis on participant agency as well as the use of online tools and on all forms of interaction, in and with specific socio-cultural and technological environments.

To turn to the socio-cultural notion of agency, van Lier (2008) uses the 'bare bones' definition of agency provided by Ahearn (2001, p.112) as 'the socioculturally mediated capacity to act' (in van Lier, 2008, p.136). However, agency can be understood as both mediated and mediating (van Lier, 2008), i.e. it is shaped by individual histories and cultural processes but will also shape interaction. In addition, agency necessarily involves self-regulation or 'initiative' and may pertain to both individual and group activity (van Lier, 2008, p.139). A further dimension of agency discussed by Thorne (2005, p.401) is that it is 'mutable' and therefore dynamic. As Thorne (2005, p.400) states: 'it is continually constructed (or debilitated) as a qualitative function of orientation to activity'.

Second language interaction in online language learning environments as conceptualized within a SCT paradigm, is therefore socio-culturally situated and mediated by technological tools, by participant interaction, and by agency. SCT also provides an epistemology within which interaction is seen as relative to ever-evolving technological contexts. According to Meskill (2013, p.3) such an epistemology is sufficiently flexible 'to accommodate novel forms of internet-based practices'.

#### **2.1.2.1 Socio-cultural theory and its implications for second language pedagogy**

At the heart of a sociocultural theoretical approach is the notion of collaboration in interaction, i.e. working together towards a common goal. Collaboration may

involve interaction amongst students or between students and teacher (Warschauer, 1997). From a pedagogical perspective, collaboration does not automatically lead to the internalization of language forms, nor to the production of new forms or the acquisition of new language skills (Kozlova & Zundel, 2013).

According to some theorists, collaboration conducive to SL development, is fostered by tasks which are meaning-oriented, authentic and which are goal-oriented or purposeful and, therefore, involve some negotiation of meaning (Kozlova & Zundel, 2013; Hampel, 2006; Ellis, 2003). In terms of online language teaching and learning, a task-based methodology, based on the above description of 'task', is therefore in keeping with a socio-cultural understanding of language learning (Thomas, 2013).

However, tasks are not always understood as meaning-focussed, i.e. related to communicative interaction in the TL. Indeed, tasks may also have a variety of purposes involving, for example, focus on form(s) or discoursal features (Willis & Willis, 2008). For the purpose of this study, I take Meskill et al.'s (1999) definition of tasks as 'sociocollaborative', i.e. they will entail some form of collaborative social interaction between learners or tutor. This is a broader definition, which does not restrict tasks to being meaning-focused but nevertheless remains true to socio-cultural conceptions of language learning. In contrast to tasks, I define language 'activities' as exercises that do not involve collaboration with others.

This distinction between 'tasks' and 'activities' does not presuppose that tasks will *a/ways* lend themselves to the internalization of language forms (as stated at the start of this section) nor that 'activities' will not. Tasks may be viewed as a socio-cultural 'tool' for language learning (Montoro Sanjose, 2012, p.40) and what is

important is how people 'make sense of tools' (2012, p.40). Moreover, activities may constitute the necessary scaffolding for tasks.

How the notion of collaborative learning, tasks and activities may relate to SP in *IlluminateLive* will be further explored throughout this thesis. However, from a sociocultural perspective, online language learning will necessarily involve varying degrees of SP, communicated through and in forms of interaction and perhaps generated by interaction. I would also argue that online SP will also be mediated by online collaborative interaction, by participant agency, by the nature of tasks and by technology. Variations in the nature, role and degree of SP may equally be found to mediate language learning in different ways.

In this section, I have discussed sociocultural theories of interaction and their extension to online language teaching and learning. I have also justified the use of SCT as a theoretical backcloth to my study. In the following section, I consider the theory and research of social and affective aspects in SLA but also draw on research from CMC and CMCL to extend my understanding of these aspects to online language learning contexts.

### **2.1.3 Social and affective aspects of SLA**

In the SLA literature, social and affective factors are sometimes unified under the term 'socio-affective' factors (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) and may also be seen as mutually influential. For example, Hurd (2008) argues that learners may use both categories of factors to control their emotions. The premise I adopt is that affective aspects cannot be dissociated from social processes and from the socio-cultural contexts in which social interaction takes place. This is in keeping with the socio-

cultural theoretical framework of my study. It is also supported by current research in the field of affect discussed in sub-section **b)**, below.

In this section, I discuss social and affective aspects of SLA in the field of learner strategies before identifying key areas of the extensive field of affect research which may be useful to my research on SP.

### **a) Learner strategies**

In face to face SLA, social and affective interaction has been commonly discussed in the context of learner strategies, i.e. strategies used by learners to make a difference to their learning (Oxford, 2003). As such, they are self-regulatory and, as & MacIntyre (2013, p.148) state, such strategies 'either consciously or semiconsciously chosen by a language learner, operate somewhere on a continuum between being intentionally deliberate and fully automatic, are purposeful and goal-directed and can be enhanced through instruction'.

Affective and social strategies have been encompassed within typologies of learner strategies by researchers in face to face SLA contexts (Chamot, 2005; Oxford, 2003). Examples of social strategies include asking questions, clarification checks or seeking help. Examples of affective strategies are managing anxiety, discussing feelings, and positive self-talk (Chamot, 2005; Oxford, 2003). Not all strategies involve interaction with others; for example, affective strategies may involve positive self-talk to manage anxiety (Oxford, 2003).

Despite research findings which positively correlate the use of learner strategies with L2 proficiency (Oxford, 2003), learner strategy research in face to face contexts has been criticized for a lack of consensus in the definition of key concepts and also for its failure to address context-specific factors (Rose, 2012;

Macaro, 2010). In online and distance language learning, however, the use of social and affective strategies has received recent attention (de los Arcos et al., 2009; Hauck & Hampel, 2008; Hurd, 2008; Stickler & Lewis, 2008; Lewis & Stickler, 2007) and in online contexts, the notion of strategies has been extended to include strategic use of online functionalities (Hauck & Hampel, 2008).

In terms of the positive impact on online language learning, the use of social and affective strategies has been associated with the development of a sense of online community, defined by Wenger (1998) as an investment by individuals in a shared learning experience for a common purpose. In online language learning contexts, the importance of fostering a sense of community is seen as crucial (Germain-Rutherford, 2015). In contexts where there is both anonymity and disembodiment, the need to address the social aspects of community building is perceived as both critically important but also as necessitating the development of new ways of 'making and maintaining contact, finding out about common interests and developing an identity as a group' (Hauck & Hampel, 2008, p.294). Furthermore, the social and affective benefits of community development are also associated with the facilitation of learning (Germain-Rutherford, 2015).

In a study of social and affective strategies employed by online language learners and using both synchronous and asynchronous media, Hauck & Hampel (2008, p.295) identified the use of social strategies which they call 'socio-environmental strategies'. These strategies involved the use of the technological functionalities and affordances of the online environments in order to enhance communication with others. Essentially, the use of these strategies, for example, cooperating, empathizing, asking questions and using humour, were found to foster a sense of community amongst learners which Hauck & Hampel (2008, p.296) regard as 'a

necessary first step for collaborative learning in general and telecollaborative learning of languages and cultures in particular’.

Likewise, in an investigation of interaction between undergraduate EFL learners, using a sociocultural framework, Peterson (2009, p.319) found that learners developed a learning community ‘based on shared norms and goals’. Although, Peterson’s study was not focused on the use of the tools of the environment, he found that learners made use of what he calls ‘discourse management strategies’ (2009, p.305) in collaborative interaction, which included socially oriented strategies such as off-task talk, requests for and provision of assistance. The use of these strategies by learners facilitated the creation of a ‘social space’, characterised by a shared perspective, which ‘appeared to facilitate TL interaction and enjoyment, and contributed to the creation of a positive and supportive environment’ (2009, p.319).

It may be the case, therefore, that the use of ‘socio-environmental’ strategies and socially oriented discourse management strategies can contribute to the development of a sense of community. On the other hand, a sense of community may also foster the use of such strategies. Having said this, the development of a sense of community may depend on a number of other variables, including appropriate tutor input (Copley Cobb, 2009) and perceived SP (Sherblom, 2010). Within any online group, individual learners may not perceive the same sense of community owing to individual differences. A sense of community may also develop over time or decrease over time, depending on participant and contextual variables (Darhower, 2007).

## **b) Affect**

'Affect' is a generic term in SLA which encompasses, 'feeling, mood, attitude, value, judgment, personality factor, learner variables' (Aragao, 2011, p.303). For other theorists, anxiety, motivation and willingness to communicate are also included under the term 'affect' (Gregerson & MacIntyre, 2013; Ortega, 2009; Ellis, 2008). Clearly, 'affect' covers a variety of factors which may all impact on the language learning process, according to SLA theory and research. For the purposes of this study, I accept Arnold & Brown's (1999, p.1) definition of 'affect' as 'broadly aspects of emotion, feeling, mood or attitude which can condition behavior and influence language learning'

Affective factors have been widely researched in SLA face to face contexts for example, motivation (Dornyei, 2010), attitudes and beliefs (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993) and anxiety (Horwitz, 2010). In addition, affect has been researched within differing theoretical paradigms. For example, Gregerson & MacIntyre (2013) summarise the three main fields of theoretical approach to motivation, i.e. social psychological, investigating the reasons why learners choose to learn languages; cognitive, exploring how classroom language tasks, for example, impact on motivation; and process-oriented approaches, which view motivation as a shifting aspect of dynamic, social processes.

Irrespective of theoretical perspective, the following are generally accepted characteristics of affective factors derived from current research literature in face to face contexts:

**i)** They are interdependent. For example, research by Aragao (2011) explores the complex interplay between emotions and beliefs.

**ii)** They may stem from multiple causes and are also influenced by context. Whereas learners have individual characteristics or differences, feelings are mutable according to how learners experience variable features of the learning context (Gregerson & MacIntyre, 2013). Willingness to communicate, for example, may be influenced by a learner's 'communicative confidence' (Ortega, 2009, p.202) and, therefore, by anxiety. This is also mutable according to contextual variables (Ortega, 2009).

**iii)** They are situated within specific sociocultural contexts and are mediated both by culture and by the L1 (Pavlenko, 2013; Brown & White, 2010).

**iv)** They may have varying manifestations within interaction, impact on interaction and be impacted upon in interaction in varying ways. Research by Imai (2010), found that supposedly negative emotions in terms of their impact on learning (i.e. boredom and frustration) could impact positively on language development depending on how these emotions were utilized by learners participating in interaction.

**v)** There is a dynamic interrelationship between affect and cognition (Brown & White, 2010; Imai, 2010; Ortega, 2009). Thoughts may trigger emotions and vice versa (Brown & White, 2010). Affect will impinge upon learning and memory (Hurd, 2008). The self-regulation of affect, i.e. 'the control of one's own affective responses by the self' (Brown & White, 2010, p.5) involves cognitive processing of emotions with the purpose of managing them to facilitate learning.

The above list (**i-v**) is not exhaustive but provides insights into affective factors which are also replicated in research on affect in online language learning contexts. For example, the context-specific nature of anxiety was a finding of research by Hampel et al. (2005), which explored aspects of online communication, including anxiety, in a study of task-based synchronous



interaction between Australian and UK-based advanced learners of German. What they found was that anxiety was related to psycho-social responses to the specific online environment. For example, there was evidence from one participant that anxiety was not experienced in face to face contexts but was a specific affective response to the synchronous language learning context. In addition, the lack of visual embodiment could be experienced as either liberating or anxiety-provoking, depending on individual responses.

A study by de los Arcos et al. (2009), which explored the interconnections between emotions (anxiety) and beliefs, also found that anxiety was context-specific. In addition, this study found that anxiety responses within audiographic conferencing environments were modified in interaction by changing beliefs about the nature of interaction. The study takes a constructivist theoretical approach to anxiety, viewing it as a social construct as opposed to something 'innate, uniform and biologically grounded' (de los Arcos et al., 2009, p.6).

The mutability of context-specific affective responses highlights the importance of:

- i) The development of learner strategies to manage emotions in order to maximize individual positive learning potential (discussed in the previous section).
- ii) The tutor's role in establishing a climate which fosters positive social and affective responses.

Within audiographic, synchronous environments, the role of the tutor in alleviating negative affect is seen as essential by some researchers (Stickler & Hampel, 2015; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). According to Rosell-Aguilar (2007, p.81), the online language tutor will need to have both specific skills attuned to the context, but also positively affective communication strategies, characterized by 'warmth and ability

to communicate'. In addition, Hampel & Stickler (2015) adapt Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) to produce a framework for skills for online tutoring. This is represented as a pyramid, the bottom stratum showing the most basic of skills required, i.e. basic ICT competence and the highest stratum showing the sophisticated development of a tutor's personal style, including the development of rapport with students. Such positively affective communication strategies may also be perceived as part of the tutor's SP.

Finally, both positive and negative emotions may impact on language learning and be communicated in interaction in varying ways. If SP involves social and affective interaction, then it follows that not all manifestations of SP in interaction will be examples of positive social and affective communication, nor perceived as such by learners. If affect is seen as multidimensional and encompassing varied emotions, then SP may also be conceptualized as having both positive or negative manifestations, or degrees of both.

#### **2.1.4 Multimodality in online language learning**

Whereas socio-cultural theory provides a framework for the importance of social interaction in language learning, and social constructivism aids my comprehension of the dynamic aspects of social and affective responses in online language interaction, I now draw on the field of multimodality for an understanding of the repertoire of inter-related meanings that can be generated in online multimodal language learning environments.

'Multimodality' is defined by Kress & van Leeuwen (2001, p.20) as 'the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined'. It is an 'umbrella theory,

encompassing other theories' (Sindoni, 2013, p.6) but when understood in relation to social semiotics, it offers a perspective on meaning- making in social contexts through a variety of systems of representation of which language is one (Scollon & Scollon, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001).

Social semiotics is defined as 'a form of enquiry' (van Leeuwen, 2005, p.3), the object of which is an exploration of the use and interpretation of semiotic resources in conjunction with other semiotic resources and within social contexts (van Leeuwen, 2005; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Semiotic resources are 'the actions and artefacts we use to communicate' (van Leeuwen, 2005, p.3) and according to Kress & van Leeuwen (2001), meaning is articulated through these resources in 'multiple articulations' (p.4) and 'in any and every sign, at every level, and in any mode' (p.112).

Applied to audiographic language learning environments, the images, emoticons and other symbolic functionalities, along with text box, microphone and whiteboard content, can be viewed as semiotic resources with meaning-making potential. Communication in this environment, therefore, is multimodal with language as one mode. SP, it may be hypothesised, will be signalled through varied and fluctuating interaction with and through semiotic resources. However, the lack of interaction with these resources will also have semiotic significance for language learners using such environments.

In addition, for Scollon & Scollon (2003, p.x) meaning systems are also 'located in the material world' and, from this perspective, specific online environments have materiality, their own rules and sociocultural practices. It is likely, therefore, that the communicative potential of the varied (interacting) modes located in the

materiality of the medium may affect the projection of SP, and impact on language development.

Although my understanding of multimodality is informed by social semiotics, as described above, I draw on multimodal research studies (see below) to comprehend how the principles of multimodal meaning-making may be practically applied to online environments.

Lamy (2004) expands interactionist models of SLA to encompass multimodal contexts in which she contends that learners need to develop new combined competences in receptive and productive skills. Her study focuses on the ways in which learners interact with the technological context with its materiality and resources, i.e. the 'setting' (Lamy, 2004, p.525), in order to make learning adjustments. The traces of these adjustments can then be observed in 'discourses and other artefacts' produced within the environment. (Lamy, 2004, p.525).

Lamy (2012) expands on Lamy (2004) by using a multimodal approach to the analysis of online conversations. Her findings extend previous understandings of the complexities of multimodal interaction which she reframes as 'a subgenre of interaction that requires new sets of analytic descriptors to understand more fully how communication and learning are played out in these environments' (Lamy, 2012, p.67). Lamy's research throws new light onto the ways in which forms of discourse may be modified within such contexts and also enhanced. The relevance of this to my study of SP lies in the possibility that just as the opportunities for self-expression through semiotic resources within the environment may enhance and modify forms of discourse, it is equally possible

that new ways of becoming socially present may expand, modify or reduce the interpersonal repertoire of learners.

The importance of multimodality in online interaction is also emphasised by Hampel (2006, p.111) who states: 'the materiality of resources and the affordances of the modes will have significant impact on interaction and communication'. The relationship between SP and language competence in online environments may therefore be influenced by the skilful use of and adaptation to the resources available. This also extends to task design and it could be hypothesised that varying degrees of SP will be dependent upon task design.

Studies which have investigated task design in SCML (Hampel, 2006; Stickler et al., 2005) have indicated that:

**a)** Effects can be unpredictable even if a learner-centred methodology is espoused by the tutor. This can be the result of specific aspects of the medium. For example, the need to rigidly turn-take in some synchronous platforms can disrupt the flow of interaction (Stickler et al., 2005). On the other hand, unpredictability may also be due to individual learner differences and attitudes towards the task. As argued in Section 2.2.2.1, tasks may best be viewed as socio-cultural tools, rather than an end in themselves.

**b)** The design of tasks needs to take into consideration the affordances of the medium used (Hampel, 2006). Whereas tasks can encourage communicative interaction, awareness and knowledge of the specific interactive potential of the tools needs to be programmed into task design. In effect, such awareness and knowledge could be applied to any language learning environment but seems particularly pertinent when considering SCMCL environments owing to their social and technological aspects (Murphy, 2009). A related notion is the possibility that

students may be 'overwhelmed by the resources' (Hampel, 2006, p.118). In other words, lack of skill or confidence in using the resources may impact on the successful completion of the task online. SP, therefore, may be found to be linked not only to task design but to skill in task execution.

The afore-going discussion of the mediational impact of multimodality on online language learning concludes the first section of this literature review. The remainder of this chapter will now focus specifically on SP theory and research in the fields of both CMC and CMCL. On the basis of this research, I will also describe and justify the use of a SP framework, which I will use in my analysis of SP in *ElluminateLive*.

## **2.2 SP theory**

### **2.2.1 Understandings of SP**

Social presence theory was developed by Short et al. (1976) in the field of communication studies. Short et al. (1976) were interested in how telecommunications media impacted upon communication. They defined SP as 'the degree of salience of the other person in a mediated interaction and the consequent salience of the interpersonal interaction' (Short et al., 1976, p.65). SP was viewed as both a quality of the medium of communication and was also perceived to be fostered in varying degrees by specific media. The more a medium was technologically facilitative of the development of SP, the more effective for communication that medium was assumed to be (Short et al., 1976).

Within the field of CMC, early conceptualisations of SP reflected this view of SP as a product of the medium. However, as knowledge evolved, it became clear that

the development of SP was not limited to the technological affordances of a given medium, i.e. to the different possibilities for interaction offered by technology (Lowenthal, 2009). Based on his CMC research, Walther (1992), suggested that individuals developed compensatory strategies to adapt to the medium and to develop relationships. This dissociation of the development of SP from the affordances of a given medium, introduced a new understanding of SP which also emerged in CMC research in educational contexts. For example, Gunawardena (1995) and Garrison et al. (2000) found that SP is impacted upon by a learner's perception of online community and by the nature of social and affective interactions.

Related to social presence is the social psychological concept of immediacy (Mehrabian, 1969) and as understandings of SP started to focus on perceptions of online participants and on the nature of social and affective communication, the concept of immediacy was used by some researchers to explicate and/or extend their understanding of SP (Kim et al., 2011; Satar, 2010; Lowenthal, 2009; Swan and Shih, 2005., Rourke et al., 2001., Gunawardena, 1995). Immediacy originated in the work of Mehrabian (1969) in face to face contexts and referred to verbal or non-verbal communication which fostered closeness with others (Kim, 2011; Rourke et al., 2001). It is therefore related to positively affective and inclusive communication such as, 'gesturing, smiling, using humor, vocal variety, personalizing examples, addressing students by name, questioning, praising, initiating discussion, encouraging feedback' (Gunawardena, 1995, p153).

Although, the nature of communication of immediacy necessarily varies according to the affordances of a given online medium, immediacy has been shown to have a positive influence on student satisfaction and learning in online contexts (Satar,

2010; Gunawardena, 1995). However, what remains under-researched is the possible negative impact of immediacy, where learners may perceive this as uncomfortable or embarrassing (Lowenthal, 2009).

As understandings of SP developed, definitions also shifted towards aspects of 'a relational system' (Kim, 2011, p.764). However, there is, as yet, no consensual definition of SP, which remains a nebulous concept, variously defined according to the perspective of the researcher (Lowenthal, 2009; Kehrwald, 2008). As Lowenthal, (2009, p 2) states:

*'It is often hard to distinguish between whether someone is talking about social interaction, immediacy, intimacy, emotion, and/or connectedness when they talk about social presence'*

In online language learning contexts, SP research is comparatively recent, having emerged within the past ten years and language researchers have tended to borrow from CMC definitions. In addition, both CMC and CMCL definitions of SP have largely developed within asynchronous text-based contexts and, according to Satar (2010, p.38): 'They all ignore the influence of the multimodal elements and the skills needed for the projection of the self via emerging CMC technologies'.

In the following section, I discuss definitions of SP in CMC educational contexts before presenting and justifying the definitions of SP to be adopted in this thesis. Along with other language researchers (Hauck & Warnecke, 2013; Satar, 2013), I borrow from CMC definitions; however, I develop a definition of SP which is specific to synchronous online multimodal language learning contexts.



### 2.2.2 Definitions of SP

Kehrwald (2010) divides definitions of online SP which focus on relational aspects of communication into three categories. These are definitions which pertain to:

**a)** An individual's perception of the SP of others.

For example, 'the degree to which a person is perceived as "real" in mediated communication' (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997, p.8).

**b)** An individual's perception of or sense of connection with others. For example, 'the degree to which participants in computer-mediated communication feel affectively connected one to another' (Swan & Shih, 2005, p.115).

**c)** An individual's ability to self-project in an online environment. For example, 'the ability of learners to project themselves socially and affectively into a community of inquiry' (Rourke et al., 2001).

The above categories of definitions all relate to social and affective aspects of interaction. However, whereas category **a)** and **b)** definitions focus on subjective perceptions of the SP of others or of a sense of connection with others, category **c)** definitions relate to the active projection of the SP of the individual.

Along with Kehrwald (2010), I see SP as a combination of all of the aforementioned aspects. I also recognize that it will have 'dynamic' aspects (Kehrwald, 2010, p.44) in that it will not remain static but will rather vary in degree and also fluctuate according to the changing perceptions of learners and the nature of social interaction. For Kehrwald (2010) degree of SP relates to the quality and quantity of social interactions. For example, a high number of socially and/or affectively oriented interactions would show a high degree of SP. However, degree of SP also related to 'richness of representations of self' and also, perhaps, to the

intensity of emotion, feeling or intimacy communicated in any given interaction (Kehrwald, 2010, p.41).

SP is therefore both a subjective phenomenon and will also have demonstrative aspects, which will be apparent in social interaction. For this reason, I draw on two distinct definitions of SP; a definition of subjective perceptions of SP (research questions 1-2) and a definition of SP as an objective, observable phenomenon in online interaction (research question 3).

### **a) Definition of perceptions of SP**

*Changing awareness of the presence of self and others, including a sense of immediacy and participation with others for social and affective purposes within audiographic synchronous online language learning contexts.*

This definition combines elements of the three categories of SP definitions previously described in its focus on:

- i)** Perceptions of the SP of others ('awareness of the presence of others').
- ii)** A sense of connectedness with others ('a sense of immediacy and participation with others for social and affective purposes').
- iii)** The projection of SP of the individual ('participation with others for social and affective purposes').

It also contains the following key aspects:

**Aspect 1:** 'the presence of self and others... within audiographic, synchronous online language learning contexts'. Definitions of SP have focused on perceptions of the SP of others rather than that of the individual learner. In addition, and as stated in section 2.2.1, CMC definitions of SP have not been specific to online language learning contexts. For the purposes of this study, therefore, my definition

of perceptions of SP encompasses both self *and* others and locates my understanding of SP within synchronous online *language learning* contexts.

**Aspect 2:** ‘...participation with others for social and affective purposes’. The focus on *social and affective* purposes in my definition places SP in social and affective domains, both of which I am interested in exploring in my research.

**Aspect 3:** My definition of perceptions of SP also introduces the idea of *purposes*. This aspect seems necessary in order to differentiate SP from other online presences which can be characterised by behaviours geared towards different outcomes, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.

## **b) Definition of Social Presence**

My definition of SP emphasizes both social and affective aspects of online interaction. It is:

*Interaction with others for social and/or affective purposes within audiographic synchronous online language learning contexts*

Notably, I use the term ‘participation’ in my definition of perceptions of SP and ‘interaction’ in my definition of SP. I see ‘participation’ as engaged interaction. It is more than interaction which may be a mechanistic activity which lacks engagement (Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2005, p.135). It does not preclude passive engagement, or minimal interaction as forms of participation, but implies the varied forms and degrees of engagement in activity. As such, it is a more subjective notion than ‘interaction’, and therefore more suited to an analysis of learner perceptions.

In contrast, the term ‘interaction’ is a more conventional term in SLA theory and methodology than ‘participation’. I use ‘interaction’ when describing transcribed

instances of online multimodal discourse. Interaction can then be analysed to gain insight into aspects of 'participation', derived from learner perceptions.

The two definitions of SP, presented and justified in this section, are derived from current understandings of SP as a phenomenon but also reflect the specificity of the bespoke online environment which forms the backdrop for this study. In the following section, I turn to the findings of SP research in the fields of both CMC and CMCL.

## **2.3 Social presence in CMC and CMCL environments**

The studies described in this section explore aspects of SP in both CMC and CMCL learning environments. They show similarity in some of their findings relating to the mediating influence on SP of technological medium, learner differences, the role of the tutor and the tasks and resources used online. They therefore mirror aspects of the findings discussed in previous sections of this chapter, which were not specific to SP. There is also consensus on the importance of SP in online learning although what remains largely unexplored is the notion that SP may not always be perceived by learners as a positive phenomenon, nor will it always have positive manifestations in terms of online interaction. What emerges from the research discussed is that SP is a complex, changing phenomenon which needs to be analysed in relation to specific socio-cultural, learning and technological environments.

### **2.3.1 SP Studies in CMC learning environments**

Most of the theory and research on SP is located in the field of CMC where its importance is clearly recognised (Kear et al., 2014; Kear, 2010; Kehrwald, 2010;

Sherblom, 2010; Kehrwald, 2008; Garrison et al., 2000; Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997). However, most studies to date have focussed on written communication in asynchronous contexts and there has been relatively little research on SP in synchronous environments. In addition, SP is generally regarded as a positive phenomenon although research by Kehrwald (2010), indicates that it may also have negative aspects.

An early study of SP by Gunawarden & Zittle (1997) found that SP was a strong predictor of student satisfaction in an asynchronous context. Gunawardena & Zittle's (1997) definition of SP focusses on the perceived realness of a person in online interaction (see section 2.2.2) and, in common with my definition of SP, they also relate SP to the notion of 'immediacy', discussed in section 2.2.1 of this chapter.

Their study additionally found that, irrespective of the medium, student perceptions of SP were dependent upon the projected SP of tutors. Also, the use of emoticons was directly related to perceptions of SP, with greater use associated with perceptions of higher degrees of SP. Although the link between teacher immediacy and perceived SP is clearly identified in this study, Gunawardena & Zittle (1997) call for further research to explore connections between SP and cognitive learning.

Kehrwald (2010, 2008), whose definition of SP is similar to my own, researched the nature, role and function of SP and found it to be:

- demonstrative, i.e. related to what learners do in the environment
- dynamic, i.e. it fluctuates

- cumulative, i.e. a learner develops a sense of the SP of other learners based on past experience.

SP is seen to be both conveyed via social cues but also influenced by the way that these cues are interpreted by interlocutors.

Like Gunawardena & Zittle (1997), Kehrwald (2008) emphasises the importance of a facilitator (or tutor) in not only developing an online presence which is conducive to the fostering of student satisfaction and provides a model of SP, but he additionally suggests that facilitators need to develop online learning materials which foster SP and motivate learners to project their SP.

Sherblom (2010, p.15) takes a constructivist stance towards interaction in CMC (both asynchronous and synchronous contexts) in that 'human communicators actively construct their CMC'. Such a constructivist stance highlights the importance of social interaction and collaboration in learning and is therefore intrinsic to a sociocultural view of learning. Sherblom's (2010) definition of SP also broadly approximates to my own in its emphasis on the social and affective aspects of online interaction and on its dimensions of perceived immediacy and psychological connectedness.

According to Sherblom (2010, p.511), the active construction of a 'positive, interactive CMC classroom culture' will depend on five important mediating variables of which SP is one. Sherblom (2010) highlights the impact of reduced social cues online but indicates the different ways in which learners may compensate for, adapt to or make use of the online environment in order to establish their online identities. For Sherblom (2010, p.500), 'active, participatory, classroom interactions are possible, but require more time and effort on the part of

the students and instructor'. In common with Kehrwald (2010, 2008) and Gunawardena & Zittle (1997), Sherblom (2010) emphasises the pivotal role of the instructor (or tutor) in developing SP.

In a study of SP in both asynchronous and synchronous online environments, Kear (2010) found that SP could be enhanced by the style of student-student interaction and also by features of the medium, i.e. member profiles increased SP in asynchronous contexts but synchronous communication was perceived as more conducive to the development of SP. With respect to student-student interaction, Kear (2010) equates SP with supportive communication which helps students to feel comfortable with each other and therefore makes them more inclined to collaborate. However, it may be argued that the more negative forms of communication reported in this study, i.e. dominating behavior and posting messages with an unpleasant tone, could also be seen as SP.

Finally, research by Kear et al. (2014), which was conducted into the use of learner profiles produced slightly different findings to the Kear (2010) study. In the 2014 study, Kear et al. (2014, p.13) found that, although the use of personal profiles enhanced a sense of SP for some learners, others did not value them in the same way due to 'privacy issues' or a preference to focus on the content of forum messages. They conclude by pointing out the importance of individual differences for 'perceptions' and 'needs'.

The studies discussed in this section provide insight into SP, into its varying nature and function and also into the different ways it may be perceived by learners. The important role of the tutor in establishing and nurturing SP both via communication strategies and in the selection of resources and course organization is also a

finding of several studies. However, whereas most researchers see SP in positive terms, Kehrwald (2010) highlights that it may also have negative manifestations. This supports the argument I made in section 2.3 in relation to the importance of also considering SP in terms of its more negative facets.

A key omission from this brief review of CMC SP research is studies which have used the theories and methodology of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison et al., 2000). As this framework is pivotal to this thesis, it will be discussed and analysed in detail in section 2.4, along with research studies which have used it. Before focusing on the CoI framework, I turn to CMCL SP research studies and the insights which may be derived from them.

### **2.3.2 SP studies in CMCL environments**

Within CMCL there also seems to be a consensus about the importance of SP to online language learning (Hauck & Warnecke, 2013; Satar, 2013; Ko, 2012; Satar, 2010; Yamada, 2009; Yamada & Akahori, 2007). However, there is a relative paucity of studies to date and existing studies have produced some similar results but also some conflicting findings. In addition, definitions of SP vary according to the researcher. For example, Satar's (2013) definition of SP approximates to my own but that of Yamada & Akahori (2007) reflects that of Short et al.'s (1976, p.65) original definition (i.e. 'the degree of salience of the other person in a mediated interaction and the consequent salience of the interpersonal interaction'). The research studies reported in this section therefore need to be viewed cautiously.

Within existing studies in synchronous contexts, the importance of visual presence is highlighted. For example, Satar's (2013) study researching SP in desktop videoconferencing interactions showed that in that medium, eye contact is important to establish SP. Ko's (2012) investigation of perceptions of SP across



three synchronous contexts (video plus audio, audio and face to face) showed that the CMC video plus audio setting was preferred to the audio setting alone. In addition, Yamada and Akahori's (2007) study exploring SP in four synchronous contexts, i.e. video conferencing, audio conferencing, text-chat with and without the image of the interlocutor, indicated the importance of the interlocutor's image in promoting SP.

Whilst the importance of visual image may be unsurprising, a further finding by Yamada & Akahori (2007) that text chat facilities are favoured by learners to audio tools raises interesting questions. It could be hypothesised that the fact that learners feel more 'relaxed and comfortable' (2007, p.25) in text chats could be due to the fact that they feel less exposed than when using audio tools. It is equally possible that SP of a different nature is established through the varied affordances of synchronous online environments, and will fluctuate according to learner characteristics, preferences and group dynamics.

Further research by Yamada (2009) seems to contradict the findings of Yamada & Akahori's (2007) study. This work suggests that voice communication has a powerful influence on affective aspects and on linguistic output. In particular, the interlocutor's presence leads to increased self-disclosure. On the other hand, environments where the interlocutor's image is not present may also lead to increased self-disclosure because of the anonymity they afford.

Perhaps the most extensive research into SP in synchronous online language learning to date is Satar's (2010) doctoral thesis in which she develops a SP framework to facilitate the analysis of interaction of language learners in a desktop

video conferencing synchronous online context. Satar's (2010) main findings with general relevance to the study of SP were that:

**a)** 'Each learner's patterns of projecting social presence are unpredictable because of individual variation. It appears that each learner projects their own presence into the interaction, while constantly interpreting that of others' (p.349). This finding is echoed by that of Kear et al. (2014) discussed in the previous section.

**b)** SP is complex and dynamic (i.e. reflecting the finding of Kehrwald, 2010)

**c)** SP online is mediated by technology, language tasks and also by whether or not the learner was a native (NS) or non-native speaker (NNS). In Satar's study, SP was reduced for NNS with fewer means of expression. In contrast, a study by Kim (2011), which investigated the participation rates of native and non-native speakers in discussion boards, found greater participation in NNS due to reduced pressure in the asynchronous mode with time for reflection. The conflicting findings of these studies may also indicate the mediating impact of affect.

**d)** Task design and task facilitation by the tutor were found to be crucial in facilitating 'off-task talk' (i.e. communication unrelated or indirectly related to a specific task or activity), which was found to facilitate relaxed interaction. However, Satar (2010) acknowledges that differentiating between 'off-task' and 'on-task' talk can be complex in language learning environments in which the task may well demand the exchange of personal information.

To summarise, the studies discussed in this section suggest that SP is influenced by the affordances of different media, mediated by technology, by the tutor's presence, by the resources used and by task design. It is also subject to individual variation in its projection and interpretation, and, finally, affected by anxiety and language proficiency.

In the following section, I return to the field of CMC and discuss the influence of the Community of Inquiry (Col) framework on both CMCL and CMC studies. I then suggest how this framework may be adapted to describe and analyse interaction in SCMCL. My reasons for utilizing the Col framework are explained in section 2.4.2 of this chapter.

## **2.4 Towards a conceptual framework for the analysis of SP in SCMCL**

### **2.4.1 The community of Inquiry framework (Col)**

In section 2.2.3 of this chapter, I described the importance for online language learning of the development of a sense of online community in both CMC and CMCL research. One type of learning community is the Community of Inquiry (Garrison et al., 2000). A Col can be perceived as distinct from other online communities, given that it is perceived as necessary for the development of collaborative learning and critical discourse, essential in higher education (Garrison et al., 2000).

According to Garrison & Cleveland-Innes (2005, p.134), the importance of the Col model<sup>7</sup> lies in its foregrounding of participation: ‘where ideas can be explored and critiqued; and where the process of critical inquiry can be scaffolded and modelled’. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the importance of the Col model for my study relates to its comprehensive view of online interaction in terms of the interaction between SP and two other presences described below. It therefore offers a means of conceptualizing the nature and role of SP in relation to other key elements of online learning. In this section, I discuss this model with respect to more recent Col studies and two alternative frameworks for online

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<sup>7</sup> I use the terms ‘framework’ and ‘model’ interchangeably in this thesis.

presence. The latter exemplify how the original Col framework (Garrison et al., 2000) has been re-interpreted to conceptualise online learning. I then explain how I use an adapted version of Garrison et al.'s (2000) original Col model to enhance my theoretical understanding of SP and also as a methodology for its analysis.

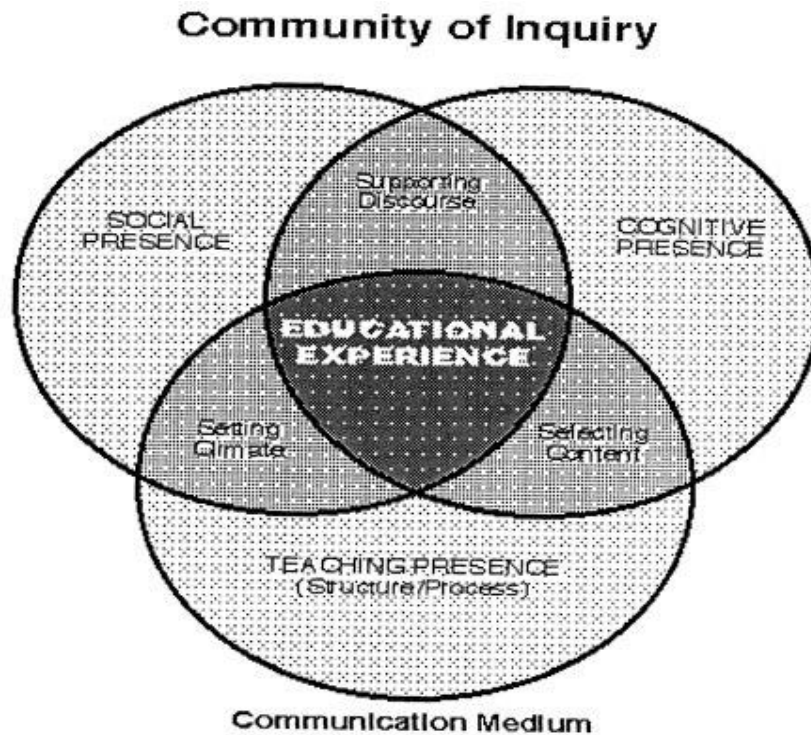
According to Nagel and Kotze (2010, p.46), the Col of Inquiry framework is 'a valid and dependable instrument to measure the quality of online teaching'. It consists of three elements: cognitive, teaching and social presence, which have been widely explored in a body of Col-based research literature with respect to their roles and impact on learning (Galley et al., 2014; Hauck & Warnecke, 2013; Hauck & Warnecke, 2012; Shea et al., 2012; Galley et al., 2010; Nagel & Kotze, 2010; Shea & Bidjerano, 2010; Rourke & Kanuka, 2009). The Col framework is an experiential model, rooted in practice and understood by Garrison et al. (2000, p.89) as 'the extent to which the participants in any particular community of inquiry are able to construct meaning through sustained communication'.

Garrison et al.'s original understanding of cognitive presence (CP) contains four stages a) a triggering event b) exploration to make sense of this event c) cognitive integration of new knowledge and d) resolution in which new knowledge is applied. Teaching presence (TP) is seen as the management of the learning environment, including 'the selection, organization, and primary presentation of course content, as well as the design and development of learning activities and assessment' (Garrison et al., 2000, p.90). It is also seen as 'facilitation' (p.90), i.e. guiding discussion and using questioning and feedback techniques. In addition, the authors discuss 'teacher immediacy' (Garrison et al., 2000, p.102) as essential to communication of teaching content but relate teacher immediacy to social rather than teaching presence.

SP is defined as the learners' ability to self- project (i.e. express their presence) into an online community, presenting themselves as 'real' people 'socially and emotionally' (Garrison et al., 2000, p.94). It is characterised by 'emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion' (p.99). In the original model, SP and TP are seen as supportive and facilitative of CP, which is given primary importance.

Of the three presences, it is SP which has received the most modification by one of the original writers. Garrison (2007, p.63) redefines SP as 'the ability to project one's self and establish personal and purposeful relationships'. In addition SP must 'move beyond simply establishing socio-emotional presence and personal relationship' (p.64) in order to develop personal but purposeful relationships. In other words, SP is now linked by Garrison (2007) to the common purpose of the community and must orientate towards this purpose. Although not explicitly stated by Garrison, this revised understanding of SP signals the importance of collaboration towards a common goal within a sociocultural theoretical paradigm. From this perspective, the projection of SP becomes an aspect of purposeful collaboration.

The Col model is represented as three overlapping circles and is shown in Figure 1 (below).



**Figure 1: The Col model (Garrison et al., 2000)**

The original Col model conceptualised the three presences as overlapping, but did not sufficiently represent their interactive nature given that ‘the dynamic relationships among the presences could have been emphasized to a greater extent’ (Garrison et al., 2010, p.6). This model has been reviewed, extended and revised but here I would like to focus on three main aspects (listed below) which have been challenged by researchers and which have aided my thinking about the relative functions of teaching, cognitive and social presence with respect to my research focus, as I explain in the rest of this section.

- a)** The relative insignificance of SP in relation to CP. According to Annand (2011, p.49), ‘The recurring suggestion of recent Col-based empirical research is that social presence is of questionable value in the online higher education learning experience because it does not appear to have an important effect on cognitive presence’.

- b)** The importance of SP with respect to cognitive presence. This is an opposing view to **a)**, above. For Hauck & Warnecke (2013; 2012), for example, SP is perceived to be of critical importance in online learning.
- c)** The incomplete nature of the Col model and, in particular, the need to include other presences. For example, Shea et al. (2012) argue for an extension to the Col framework to include 'Learning Presence', which is explained further in this section.

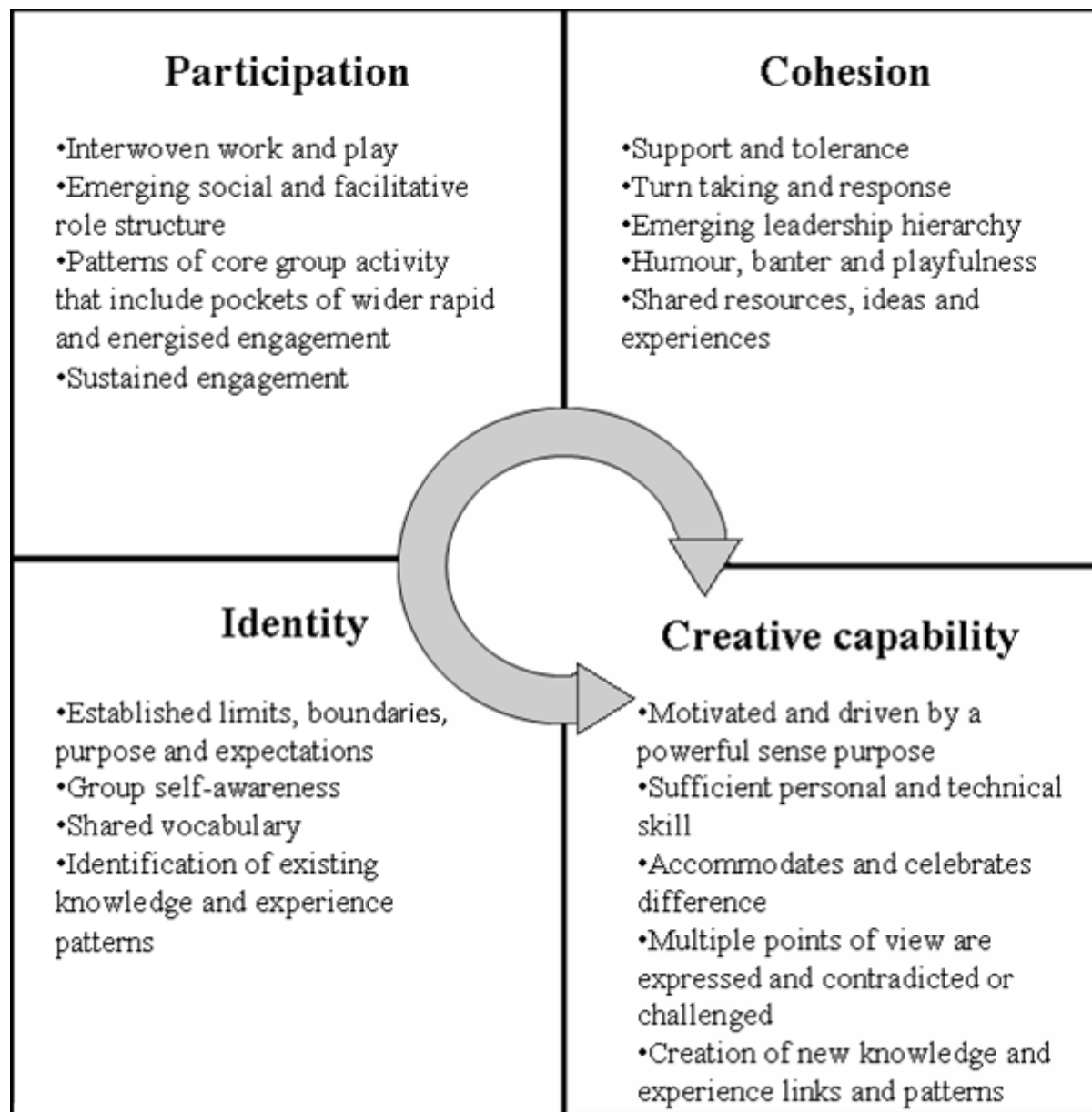
With respect to the first aspect, in an extensive critique of SP research based on the Col model, Annand (2011) claims that SP does not impact significantly on CP, perceived to be the main goal of online learning. A distinction is made between the activation of higher order cognitive processes and surface learning. The connections between SP and higher order learning are suggested to be tenuous and also uncorroborated (Annand, 2011).

The studies reviewed by Annand (2011) were based on asynchronous environments and not specific to language learning. In addition, Annand (2011) points out that the Col framework was originally based on social-constructivist learning theory but has been researched within an objectivist paradigm. He acknowledges that socially-oriented subject-areas, which may rely more on constructivist learning theory and emphasise reflective practice and collaboration, may be more appropriately researched within the Col framework. Language learning contexts, therefore, in which the development of communicative competence is seen as contingent upon communication and interaction (Heins et al., 2007), may well prove to be a fertile area of research using the Col framework. Finally, as was discussed in section 2.1.3 of this chapter, there is a consensus about the connection between cognition and affect in SLA research.

With respect to the second aspect, the model of Galley et al. (2010) has been proposed as an alternative to the Col model (Hauck & Warnecke, 2013). As Hauck & Warnecke (2013) argue, the Col model sees SP as facilitative of CP and therefore of lesser importance to CP in online environments. However, in contrast to the studies reported by Annand (2011), the authors argue for a reconceptualization of the role of SP as central to learning, and 'as the condition sine qua non for learning in CMC contexts and thus as a core e-literacy skill rather than a facilitating element' (Hauck & Warnecke, 2013, p.115). Furthermore, they argue that SP emerges through participation.

Based on the findings of their research carried out with higher education tutors in an asynchronous context, Hauck & Warnecke (2013; 2012) argue that Galley et al.'s (2010) 'Community Indicators Framework' (Figure 2) is a more useful model for understanding CMC.





**Figure 2: Community Indicators Framework (Galley et al., 2010)**

According to Hauck & Warnecke (2013), this framework is composed of four aspects: *identity*, *participation*, *cohesion* and *creative capability*. *Identity* refers to learner perceptions of themselves and others in the online community, *participation* refers to the varied forms of learner participation, *cohesion* relates to behaviours, which build positive affect in the environment and, finally, *creative capability* is the sharing of knowledge and understanding. All elements are

interrelated and interact as part of a dynamic participatory framework (Hauck & Warnecke, 2013).

In this framework, SP 'is both the means *and* the end of online communication and interaction and the result of participatory literacy' (Hauck & Warnecke, 2013, p.112). Moreover, 'the distinction between teacher and learner has been removed' (p.112), given that learner and tutor participation are understood in relation to identity and the positions they occupy within the community.

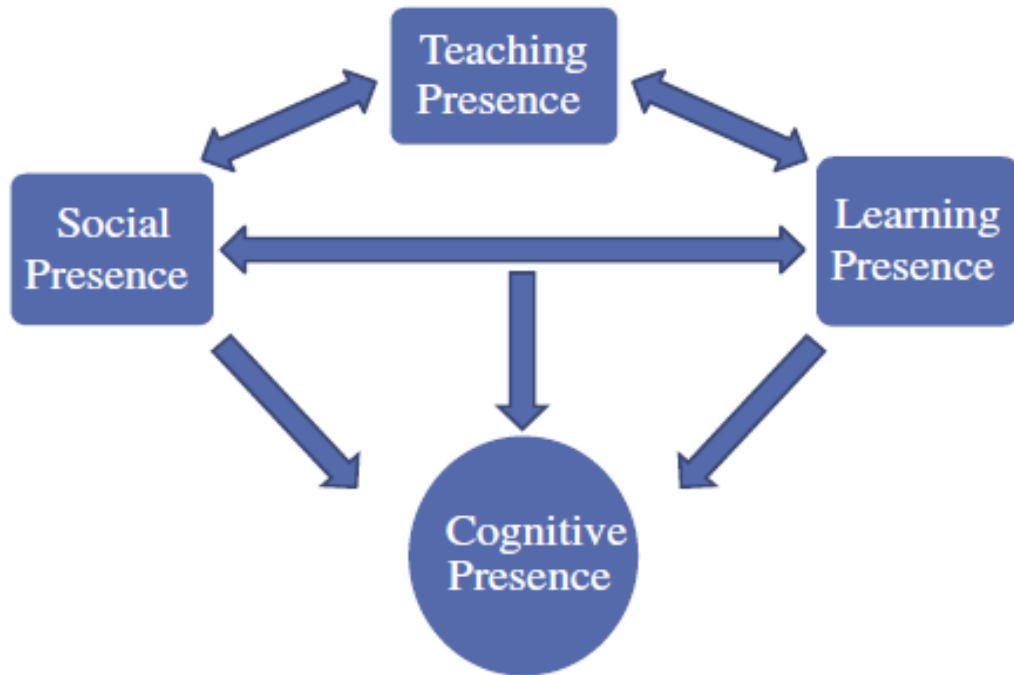
Participation in the Community Indicators Framework is seen by Galley et al. (2010) as a fluid process in which participant identities shift and evolve through interaction with others and also with the online environment. This is a constructivist view of identity in that what happens online will be influenced by perceptions and projections of self and responses to these within a dynamic participatory process. Although some of the behaviours identified within the Community Indicators Framework may be observable, learner notions of shifting identities may also be understood via accessing learner perceptions.

Whereas Hauck & Warnecke (2013) draw on Galley et al.'s Community Indicators Framework (2010) to argue for the centrality of SP in CMC, Shea et al. (2012) review the conceptualisation of different types of presence in the Col framework and argue for the inclusion of 'learning presence' as a fourth interacting presence in online learning. This brings me to the third aspect listed above with respect to challenges to the Col.

For Shea et al.(2012, p.90), 'learning presence' represents self-regulated learning, 'and reflects the proactive stance adopted by students who marshal thoughts,

emotions, motivations, behaviours and strategies in the service of successful online learning'. It therefore signals 'agency and control' (p.90).

Shea et al. (2012) analysed hundreds of examples of collaborative learner discourse in two fully online asynchronous courses and identified examples of 'learning presence'. The impetus for this study was the discovery that elements of student-to-student discourse could not be adequately coded using Col coding schemes based on teaching, social and cognitive presences. In addition to the identification of examples of 'learning presence', Shea et al. (2012) also found that 'learning presence' was a more reliable predictor of course grades than any of the other three Col presences. Moreover, 'learning presence' could be compensatory, leading to the achievement of cognitive gains, where social and teaching presences were found to be less effective. Cognitive presence, therefore, results from the interplay of teaching, social and learning presences and this is represented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3: A revised model for asynchronous online learning based on the Col framework (Shea & Bidjerano, 2012)**

Both Shea et al.'s (2012) concept of 'learning presence' and Hauck & Warnecke's (2013) argument for the centrality of SP in the Community Indicators Framework, extend and reposition elements of the Col framework in useful but different ways. With the inclusion of 'learning presence' Shea et al.'s (2012) model adds another presence which interrelates with teaching and social presences but maintains the hierarchical importance of cognitive presence which is represented differentially as a circle in Figure 3. In contrast, the Community Indicators Framework (Figure 2), shifts the importance from CP to SP and focuses upon the interactive participatory skills which characterise it.

What Shea et al. (2012) describe as 'learning presence' appears to be subsumed within the four aspects of Galley et al.'s framework (2010). Although both revisions of the Col framework are supported by research, they represent differing

perspectives. Neither Shea et al.'s model (2012) nor Galley et al.'s (2010) Community Indicators Framework differentiates between specific forms of learning, although Shea et al. (2012, p.90) deem self-regulation (learning presence) to be important 'in social forms of learning'.

The following aspects of the models discussed in this section, have extended my understanding of SP in online learning:

- The fluidity of multiple forms of participation in Galley et al.'s (2010) model highlights the possibility of shifts in the type and nature of SP as part of a dynamic interactive process.
- In both the models of Shea et al. (2012) and Galley et al. (2010), individual learner differences (either as self-regulation or as identity formation) are seen as significant within a Col framework. For Shea et al. (2012) these differences represent 'learning presence', whereas for Galley et al. (2010) they are aspects of online learning which influence the negotiation of fluid identities in interaction and are part of an overarching SP. In both models, individual learner differences are not seen as static characteristics, but rather as susceptible to change within interaction. This is a process-oriented, constructivist perspective which is in keeping with the constructivist epistemology espoused in my research.
- The centrality of SP as the 'sine qua non' of online learning in the model of Galley et al. (2010) is not generally supported by other, recent Col studies (Annand, 2011). It is evident, therefore, from the studies discussed in this section, that the relative importance of the three (interacting) presences of the Col model requires further research and in different subject areas, given the fact that research findings have been used to develop competing models which emphasise the importance of its different elements.

- The notion that SP emerges through participatory skills (Hauck & Warnecke, 2013) is a reversal of the usual premise that learners project their SP subject to individual and contextual variables, i.e. it is seen as an effect *of* participation rather than an impetus *for* participation. Indeed, as Hauck and Warnecke (2013) argue, this notion has implications for task design, given that certain tasks are likely to promote SP to a greater extent than others. This further supports the importance of task design discussed in relation to research by Kehrwald (2008) in the previous section.

#### **2.4.2 Conceptualising the role of social presence in audiographic, synchronous online language learning contexts**

The Col model is perhaps the most developed framework within which SP has been analysed in distance CMC. This framework has been used as a theoretical backcloth for an understanding of how different types of presence may interact and be interrelated in an online learning environment. It also provides a methodological framework for the analysis of the relative roles and functions of online presences.

Within the Col framework, each of the three presences is described in terms of categories and indicators which may be observable in online interaction. SP, for example is broken down into three domains: affective, interactive and cohesive. Within these categories, indicators relate to communicative behaviours which may be observable online. The Col framework has been used in a variety of asynchronous contexts to a) identify and validate the existence of the three online presences b) explore how they interrelate in online learning. The latter has been greatly facilitated through the development of a common survey instrument which

has been used in quantitative studies using content analysis (Arbaugh et al., 2008).

The Col framework, therefore perhaps comes closest to providing both a theory and methodology for the study of SP in CMC. In terms of my research study, I have decided to use the Col framework for the following reasons:

- a)** It allows for differentiation between different types of presence (and the communicative behaviours which characterise them). It provides a coherent framework for analysis of specific aspects of SP in relation to other elements in the environment, i.e. variables influencing how SP may impact on language learning.
- b)** The social-constructivist orientation of the framework is in keeping with the socio- cultural theoretical framework of my research.
- c)** Its social-constructivist orientation is particularly suited to social forms of learning which are contingent upon collaborative interaction.
- d)** The SP categories of the Col are reflected in my focus on affective behaviour (or 'immediacy' behaviours) and social participation in my definition of SP.

However, the results of Col studies could be criticised for lacking generalisability to different subject areas and also for the fact that they are predominantly located in asynchronous settings. For this reason, I have adapted the Col framework for use in audiographic synchronous language learning contexts. Crucially, this adapted model contains a new presence which I call 'language learning presence' (LLP), which is distinct from 'learning presence' (Shea et al., 2012), and also an adapted version of TP, both of which need to be understood and defined in terms of how these presences might manifest in *IlluminateLive*.

### **i) Language learning presence**

I see LLP as encompassing both learning *about* the language through explicit focus on form(s), for example, and also language practice. The former will involve cognitive engagement with rules about the language in order to understand them. The latter will involve language practice from the most controlled (i.e. where learners are instructed to practise the use of specific grammatical or functional items) through to free practice, where learners freely express their meanings using the TL. Language practice also, necessarily, involves learning about the language just as learning about language rules may facilitate language practice. Within a sociocultural theoretical paradigm, both CP and LLP will be activated through participation and collaboration with others. However, in the case of LLP, participation and collaboration will be both the means and end of language learning when the TL is used in practice activities.

Table 1, below, provides a simple (and simplified) example of how CP and LLP might interrelate in a structured, online language tutorial and using the four aspects of CP described by Garrison et al., (2000). As stated above, these are a) a triggering event b) exploration to make sense of this event c) cognitive integration of new knowledge d) resolution (i.e applying new knowledge). As SLA is a developmental process (Lantolf et al., 2015), however, there is no one to one, linear relationship between learning and practising the language and the production of correct language forms. Free practice of language in the resolution phase may not necessarily involve correct language use.



<b>Cognitive presence</b>	<b>Language learning presence</b>	<b>Example of student interaction</b>
1. A triggering event	Engagement with specific language content	Matching new words to definitions using the whiteboard
2. Exploration to make sense of this event	Negotiating meaning either in the TL or English e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking and answering questions</li> <li>• Clarifying and seeking clarification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarifying the meaning of new vocabulary</li> <li>• Asking about pronunciation</li> <li>• Asking questions related to contextual use of new vocabulary</li> </ul>
3. Cognitive integration of new knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practising language using the TL (i.e. grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation or skills development)</li> <li>• Negotiating meaning in the TL or English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in pairs to complete a dialogue using the new vocabulary in context</li> <li>• Seeking clarification from partner and clarifying understanding to partner</li> </ul>
4. Resolution	Communicating freely with others in the TL using previously practised language	Using the new vocabulary freely in social interaction in groups or pairs

**Table 1: Linking CP and LLP**

Definitions of LLP, like SP, need to reflect both learner perceptions of their subjective view of language learning and demonstrative aspects, which would be apparent in social interaction. My two definitions of LLP are therefore as follows:

#### **a) Perceptions of LLP**

*Awareness of language learning of self and others and of participation with others for language learning purposes within audiographic synchronous online language learning contexts.*

#### **b) LLP**

*Learner interaction with others for language learning purposes in audiographic synchronous online language learning environments.*

## **ii) Teaching presence**

With respect to TP and, as stated above, definitions need to capture the specific nature of teaching activity in online language tutorials. To facilitate this, I turned to conversation analysis (CA). Seedhouse (2005, p.182) identified a 'core institutional goal' in relation to L2 classroom interaction and this is 'that the teacher will teach the learners the L2'. He added that: 'This core institutional goal remains the same wherever the L2 lesson takes place and whatever the pedagogical framework the teacher is working in'. He argued that 'the teacher's pedagogical focus and the linguistic forms and patterns of interaction produced by the learners' are inextricably linked (Seedhouse, 2005, p.182).

My definitions of TP (separated according to learner perceptions and my observations of TP in online interaction) reflect this connection between interaction and pedagogical purpose. They also necessarily include the idea of agency, given that a teacher initiates and orchestrates (or manages) what learners do in language tutorials. I therefore define TP as:

**a)** *The management of forms of interaction with learners for pedagogical purposes within audiographic synchronous online language learning contexts.*

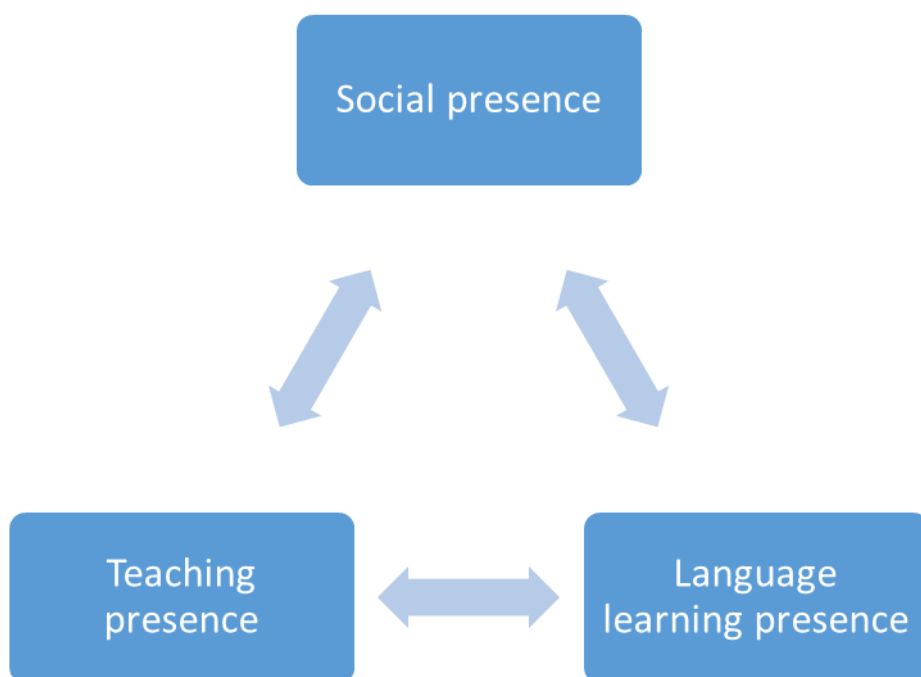
Perceptions of TP are:

**b)** *Perceptions of the management of forms of interaction with learners for pedagogical purposes within audiographic synchronous online language learning contexts.*

Finally, for both LLP and TP, I use the term 'interaction' (as opposed to 'participation') when discussing online discourse.

I initially found it helpful to conceive of my adapted Col framework in terms of the revised model shown in Figure 4. An element of this revised model is the interactive nature of the presences. What it perhaps does not adequately do is to capture the mingling of presences in some forms of interaction, represented by the original Col model (see Figure 1) as a venn diagram. Possible overlaps in presence will be explored through my research data.

## Multimodal online environment



**Figure 4 : Adapting the Col framework for language learning contexts**

## 2.5 Summary

- a)** A socio-cultural paradigm is useful for a study of SP within a SCMCL context. Such a paradigm emphasizes the importance of agency, mediation and collaborative interaction for language development (2.1.2).
- b)** Within an SCT paradigm, the importance of multimodality in relation to SP is conceptualised by drawing on a social semiotic understanding of the meaning-making affordances of online resources (2.1.4).

**c)** Theories and research of social and affective aspects in SLA and their impact on language development may provide insights into the role of SP in online language learning. Social and affective aspects have been found to be:

i) interrelated with cognition; ii) mutable according to sociocultural context; iii) susceptible to regulation through the development of learner and teacher strategies and iv) to contribute to the development of a sense of social community.

I argue that social and affective factors are best studied within a social-constructivist conceptual framework which emphasizes their contextual mutability (2.1.3).

**d)** The research studies discussed in this chapter testify to the complex nature of SP, given that it has been subject to different definitions and researched within a variety of mostly asynchronous contexts, producing varied results. There seems to be a consensus that SP is important in online learning although the degree of importance to learning (or cognitive presence) has been disputed. What is lacking in the research discussed is a common definition of SP, and a common methodology for investigating its effectiveness within the same (or similar) subject areas (2.2.1 & 2.2.2; 2.3.1 & 2.3.2).

**e)** Having said **d)**, above, there is some consensus in the literature regarding:

- The pivotal importance of the teacher or facilitator not only for the generation of SP in an online learning environment, but also as a model for learners in the projection of their individual SP.
- The selection of types of online materials and task design within different online media which may foster varying degrees of SP (2.3.1 & 2.3.2).

**f)** A constructivist approach to SP as a dynamic phenomenon is a useful way of conceptualising SP. However, I contend that SP needs to be analysed within a specific Col. To this effect, I have adapted definitions of SP and TP for online

language learning contexts. I also replace CP with a new presence, 'language learning presence' (2.4.1 & 2.4.2).

# Chapter 3: Research Methodology

## Introduction

The literature of research methodology provides insight into varying methods, research instruments and research analysis techniques but there is seemingly no overall consensus as to how terms related to methodology are used within the two broad fields of quantitative and qualitative approaches. For example, the word '*method*' is used for interviews in relation to qualitative research, or surveys in relation to quantitative research. These methods may also be described as research *instruments* used within other research methods (e.g. case studies, grounded theory or action research).

Moreover, thematic analysis techniques are sometimes referred to as 'content analysis' in qualitative research (for example, Spencer et al., 2003, p.200); yet content analysis is also a distinct analytic method which may be conducted within both quantitative and qualitative research. In the face of such varied use of terminology, I aim to be both clear and consistent in my use of terms in this chapter, and also to provide definitions, where appropriate.

The aim of this chapter is to retain a logical consistency in my description of the methods used for both data collection and analysis within my chosen qualitative approach. In turn, I also aim to justify my methodological approach in relation to the philosophical underpinnings of my study and against its theoretical backcloth, established in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 is divided into two parts. In Part one, I present the focus of my research with respect to my research questions, derived from the literature review in Chapter 2. I then introduce the context of my study before describing and justifying my research paradigm in relation to its philosophical underpinnings and overarching qualitative methodological approach. The final two sections situate my research methods and data analysis techniques within a qualitative methodology.

Part two is concerned with data collection and analysis. I introduce this part by summarising my methods for both data collection and analysis, mapped to my research questions. I then provide details relating to the research participants and the ethics and access procedures and processes to which I adhered. The middle sections turn to a detailed description and justification of my data collection and analysis techniques. Finally, I consider issues of validity and reliability, describe and explain the methodological issues I encountered, and justify my rejection of possible alternative approaches to data collection and analysis.

## **Part One: Methodology**

### **3.1 Focus of my study and research questions**

The focus of my study arises from a gap in the literature on SP identified in Chapter 2; specifically that there is little research into the nature and role of SP in audiographic, synchronous online language learning contexts. Also, existing research has tended to focus on perceptions of the SP of others rather than self. I therefore investigate learner perceptions of the nature and role of their *own* SP and that of *other* online participants (peers and tutors) in online language tutorials, using *IlluminateLive*. I also explore the nature and role of SP through my own

observations of what learners do in these tutorials. My research questions (shown again, here, in Table 1) are as follows.

<b>Qu 1</b>	<b>According to the perceptions of learners, how and to what extent do aspects of SP influence language learning presence (LLP) in online language tutorials?</b>
<b>Qu 1.1</b>	How and to what extent do aspects of the SP of the individual influence their ability to learn and practise language in online language tutorials?
<b>Qu 1.2</b>	How and to what extent do aspects of the SP of other learners influence the ability to learn and practise the language of both the individual learner and the group in online language tutorials?
<b>Qu 1.3</b>	How and to what extent do aspects of the SP of the tutor influence the ability to learn and practise the language of both the individual learner and the group in online language tutorials?
<b>Qu 2</b>	<b>According to the perceptions of learners, what factors influence the projection of SP in online language tutorials?</b>
<b>Qu 2.1</b>	How and to what extent might these factors be related to individual responses to and in the online environment?
<b>Qu 2.2</b>	How and to what extent might these factors be related to the uses of the tools of the online environment?
<b>Qu 2.3</b>	How and to what extent might these factors be related to other aspects of the online environment?
<b>Qu 3</b>	<b>Is there evidence from online observations that learner perceptions of the nature and role of SP relate to observed aspects of the participation of tutor and learners in the online setting?</b>

**Table 2: Research questions**

Question 1 foregrounds an exploration of learner perceptions of the influence of SP on what I call ‘language learning presence’ (Chapter 2, 2.4.2). The focus of question 1 is perceptions of the SP of self, peers and the tutor.

Question 2 investigates learner perceptions of factors which might influence the projection and development of SP in the online context. It further explores research findings discussed in Chapter 2, which suggest that SP may be dependent upon varied factors, including individual responses and the material



affordances and limitations of the environment. An additional sub-question (2.3) aims to collect data about further aspects of the online context which may be derived from learner perceptions.

Question 3 investigates the nature and role of SP through observations of online tutorials. Data collected aims to extend and triangulate my findings derived from the analyses of data sets collected from research questions 1 and 2. I describe and explain the methods used to collect data for all three questions in section 3.10 of this chapter.

## **3.2 Research context**

### **3.2.1 Institutional context of my study**

Language students at the Open University study French, German, Italian, Spanish or Chinese. At any one time, no more than two languages are studied consecutively but these may be studied at different levels. Language tutorials are offered as part of a blended approach to learning, meaning that tuition is provided via a mix of face-to-face and online tutorials, asynchronous forums, telephone and email. As stated in the introduction to this thesis, online tutorials are delivered within an audiographic synchronous online platform, which, at the time of conducting my research was *ElluminateLive*. This has now been replaced by *OULive*, a similar online environment, provided by Blackboard Collaborate.

Lesson content may include collaborative tasks, activities related to specific structures, functions or vocabulary or presentations about language, culture or course content. Talk about language will occur in English and/or in the TL. Off-task talk in the TL, i.e. talk not specifically related to an activity or task, is also a

common feature of tutorial interaction. Depending on level, students attend a varying number of online tutorials but the minimum offered is 8 hours across a module.

### **3.2.2 Multimodal context of the study**

*ElluminateLive* is a multimodal environment. As Kenning (2010, p.4) indicates, one of the challenges for multimodal analysis is the apparent lack of consistency in the use of terminology, given that terms 'are not used in the same manner across the field'. Below, I set out my understanding of the terms I use which relate to aspects of the multimodal context of my study.

'Modes' are 'semiotic resources which allow the simultaneous realisation of discourses and types of interaction' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p.21). The available modes within the audiographic environment of *Elluminate* are audio, spoken, written, visual and iconic. Several modes may interrelate within one 'resource' or 'tool'<sup>8</sup>, i.e. written text and visuals in the text chat. Alternatively, a single mode, i.e. visual, may be available through different resources, i.e. pictures, icons etc. (Lamy, 2012).

Where I refer to 'resources' or 'tools' in *ElluminateLive*, I mean the material facility, offered by the environment. Tools include text chat, voting buttons, pictures, break out rooms, interactive whiteboards, microphone and icons. The microphone will be referred to interchangeably in this thesis as both 'microphone' and 'audio facility'. This is because it is represented in *ElluminateLive* by both the word 'audio' and by an image of a microphone; in addition, the 'audio set up wizard' controls both audio and microphone settings. Examples of icons are the 'hands-up' symbol to

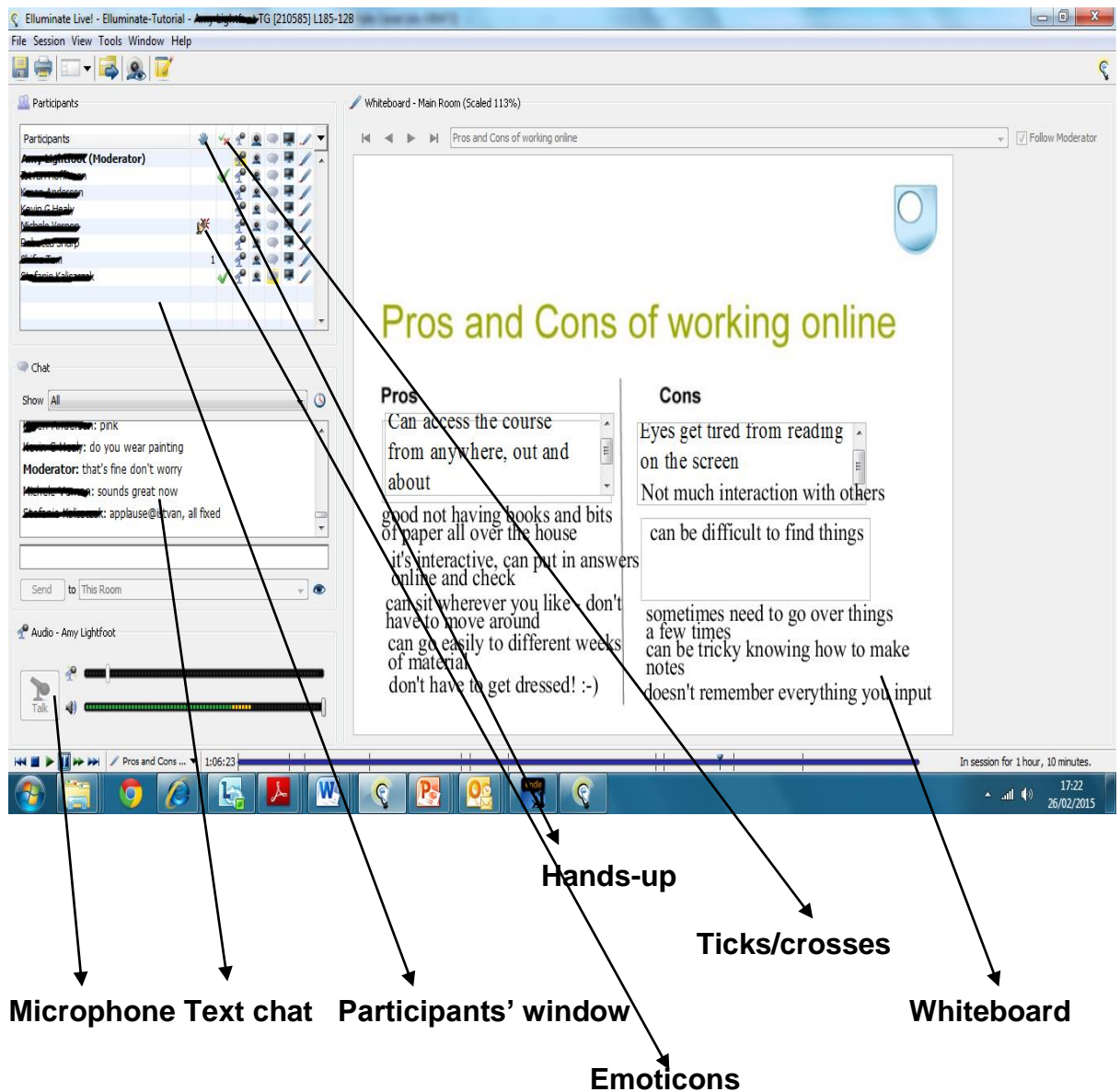
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<sup>8</sup> I use these terms interchangeably in this thesis.

show a participant wishes to speak, the 'away' symbol, which indicates temporary absence, ticks and crosses to show agreement/disagreement and emoticons (smileys, applause etc.).

Online 'tools' have 'functionalities', i.e. technological aspects, which participants use in order to communicate. Clickable icons, data sharing, manipulating material on whiteboards, sending and receiving synchronous messages are, therefore, all functionalities. *ElluminateLive* does not show moving images of learners, which is one significant difference from videoconferencing platforms.

Finally, the 'affordances' of the multimodal environment are 'the different possibilities and constraints of the environment, which give agents different options for action' (Lamy & Hampel, 2007, pp.34-35). If a student's microphone does not work, that is a failure of functionality. However, the student may then take advantage of other communicative affordances of the environment, for example by using the text chat, to communicate the loss of functionality of the microphone. A screenshot of the *Elluminatelive* interface is shown in Figure 5.



**Figure 5: ElluminateLive**

### 3.3 Research paradigm

In this section I discuss my research paradigm, defined by Burgess et al. (2006, p.54) as 'a world-view that defines for its holder the nature of the 'world', the individual's place in it, and the range of relationships in that world'. This world-view concerns the philosophical framework of my study, which I describe and justify before going on to relate this framework to my choice of an overarching qualitative research paradigm.

### **3.3.1 Epistemology**

Socio-cultural theory, as discussed in Chapter 2, provides an overarching epistemological framework for my study of the nature and role of SP in online language learning because it emphasises the all-important mediational impact of the socio-cultural context. In addition, my study draws on learner perceptions and my own observations of tutorials. As in all qualitative research, a study of the meanings created by subjects (those of learners and my own as observer) entails adherence to an epistemology which 'advocates the study of direct experience taken at face value' (Cohen et al., 2011, p.24), i.e. the subjective meanings of individuals are valued.

Within a socio-cultural approach, I take an interpretivist, constructivist stance (Burgess et al., 2006), which views human experience as emerging from a fluid, dialectical relationship between social and psychological processes. As Meskill (2013, p.5) states, such a position stands: 'in stark contrast to positivist positions that hold forth the tradition of faith in unassailable truths'. From a constructivist perspective, knowledge does not reside in the individual but is actively co-created. This co-creativity is defined in terms of interaction with others within a socio-cultural context, which leads to the on-going refinement and development of existing knowledge located in the individual. Learning is therefore an active process which may be fostered by computer technology as learners interact with the medium, the learning content and also with others (Simina and Hamel, 2005).

### **3.3.2 Ontology**

A socio-cultural, constructivist epistemology offers a relativist ontological perspective which views reality as, 'processual and social and emerges anew

each time and again, out of specific interactions with the world, the word and others, always in situated contexts' (Ortega, 2009, p.217). What is evident from this perspective is that there is not one version of reality but rather interconnected meanings, which are a product of the inner realities of the individual *in interaction with* social actors and processes. However, although I accept the position that reality is constructed according to interpretative frameworks, I also believe that social interaction has to take place against a backcloth of consensual interpretations of 'reality' because without any consensus or conflict, there can be no analysis or meanings to be drawn from observed experience.

This ontological stance extends to my role as a researcher. Whereas I acknowledge that my subjectivity will necessarily run through my study, not only through the choice of methods used but also in my interpretation of data, I also expect that my research will have resonance beyond my own internal realities.

### **3.3.3 Methodological approach**

Such epistemological and ontological frameworks are consistent with an overarching qualitative methodological approach to the study of SP, which foregrounds the relativity of my research to a specific context. According to Snape & Spencer (2003, p.3), 'there is fairly wide consensus that qualitative research is a naturalistic, interpretative approach concerned with understanding the meanings which people attach to phenomena (actions, decisions, beliefs, values etc.) within their social worlds'.

I am aware of criticisms of qualitative research as not being as rigorous or reliable as quantitative research (Silverman, 2010). However, such criticisms may be seen as anachronistic, given the evolution of qualitative research since the end of the

twentieth century, and the greater transparency in the use of qualitative methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Snape & Spencer, 2003).

Within the ontological, epistemological and qualitative paradigms described so far in this section, my research design reflects both inductive and theoretical approaches. A theoretical or deductive approach is defined by Braun & Clarke (2006, p.86) as 'driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the area'. Such an approach, for example, may start out from a central hypothesis which is tested through the research process. An 'inductive' approach, on the other hand, aims to generate theory through research, and is therefore a 'bottom-up' process (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.83). I did not design my research from a central hypothesis but rather sought to explore the phenomenon of SP through the data gathering process. However, I also acknowledge that ideas derived from the research literature influenced the development of my research questions, and, consequently, the design of my research instruments.

I used mixed methods to collect data. These were questionnaires, interviews and recorded observations of tutorials. Such an approach may, at first sight, seem to undermine my adherence to a qualitative research paradigm. However, as Plowright (2011, p.190) argues, an integrated methodology can be usefully deployed within 'a relativist social epistemology' and for Burgess et al. (2006, p.57) such 'multiplicity' may add 'rigour, breadth and depth to the overall research design'.

A further aspect of the mixed-method approach I adopted is that each method has its merits and pitfalls; such an approach has the potential to compensate for these pitfalls through varied opportunities for triangulation. Ritchie (2003, p.43) defines

triangulation as 'the use of different methods and sources to check the integrity of, or extend, inferences drawn from the data'. He goes on to state that triangulation 'is also often cited as one of the central ways of 'validating' qualitative research evidence' (2003, p.43). Through triangulation, therefore, I aimed to increase the validity of my research findings across the three data sets derived from my research methods.

In terms of the distinction between emic and etic approaches (Hennink et al., 2011), my research reflected both, in that I tried to remain faithful to the perceptions of my research participants, thereby adopting an emic approach, but also aimed for reliability through triangulation (an etic stance). However, I also acknowledge that the process of triangulation was necessarily influenced by my subjectivity as researcher in directing and designing my research approach.

### **3.4 Research methods**

In this section, I situate my research methods within the qualitative research paradigm described in section 3.3.3 and justify my choice of questionnaires, interviews and tutorial observations.

#### **3.4.1 Questionnaires**

Traditionally, questionnaires are a useful tool for the collection of quantitative data but where open questions are used, data of a more qualitative nature can be collected. With respect to quantitative data derived from the questionnaire, any statistical analysis of closed research questions was used to develop a superficial understanding of trends in learner perceptions as a springboard for further exploration through open questions. According to Wisker (2008), for small scale



surveys, there is no necessity to go beyond description of statistics and the relationship between them. In addition, this description in my study was closely allied to responses from open questions which were analysed via thematic analysis techniques which I describe in section 3.6.1. The overall approach to questionnaire data was, therefore, qualitative.

One acknowledged disadvantage of questionnaires is that the data produced can be superficial or at least requiring further interpretation through the use of other research instruments. According to Silverman (2010, p.48), questionnaires can be used 'in order to establish the broad contours of the field'. This then paves the way for qualitative research 'to look in depth at a key issue' (Silverman, 2010, p.48). In my study, questionnaire responses from a sample of respondents were explored in greater depth through interviews. I used questionnaires, therefore, as part of a triangulated approach, acknowledged by Cotton et al. (2010) to be a useful way of developing understanding of research subject(s). My questionnaire is shown in Appendix 1.

### **3.4.2 Interviews**

My choice of interviews as research instruments was governed by the fact that interviews can provide a wealth of qualitative data. As Denscombe (2010, p.111) states: 'The nature of emotions, experiences and feelings is such that they need to be explored rather than reported in a word or two'. A further function of interviews as a follow-up to questionnaires is triangulation, which, as previously stated, is an advantage of a mixed methods approach. I therefore opted to conduct semi-structured interviews, i.e. to pursue key issues emerging from the questionnaire

data whilst, at the same time, allowing the participants<sup>9</sup> freedom to explore their own thoughts.

My theoretical stance with respect to interviews is constructivist, given that I believe that 'knowledge is not given but is created and negotiated' (Legard et al., 2003, p.139). This stance is in keeping with the overarching philosophical position described in section 3.3. In this view I, as interviewer, engaged in a discussion with the interviewees and co-created, in collaboration, the content of the interview. It is a stance that acknowledges that my role as interviewer will necessarily influence the trajectory of the discourse produced through the interview process. However, it does not make the testimonies of the interviewees any less valid.

### **3.4.3 Observation of online tutorials**

I take a similar constructivist stance towards my third research method, tutorial observation, given that I acknowledge that my role as observer will necessarily affect how I interpret what is observed. Observation of recorded online tutorials was also used as a method for triangulation of my research data. According to Cotton et al. (2010, p.3), the use of observation, as a research method is advantageous as data can be produced 'in a natural situation, rather than through the more artificial context of an interview, focus group or questionnaire'. They go on, however, to highlight the advantages of using observation alongside other methods 'to provide a greater understanding of the situation' (2010, p.3).

With respect to data from tutorial observations, the procedures used to both collect and analyse this data reflect the principles of qualitative research. As stated in

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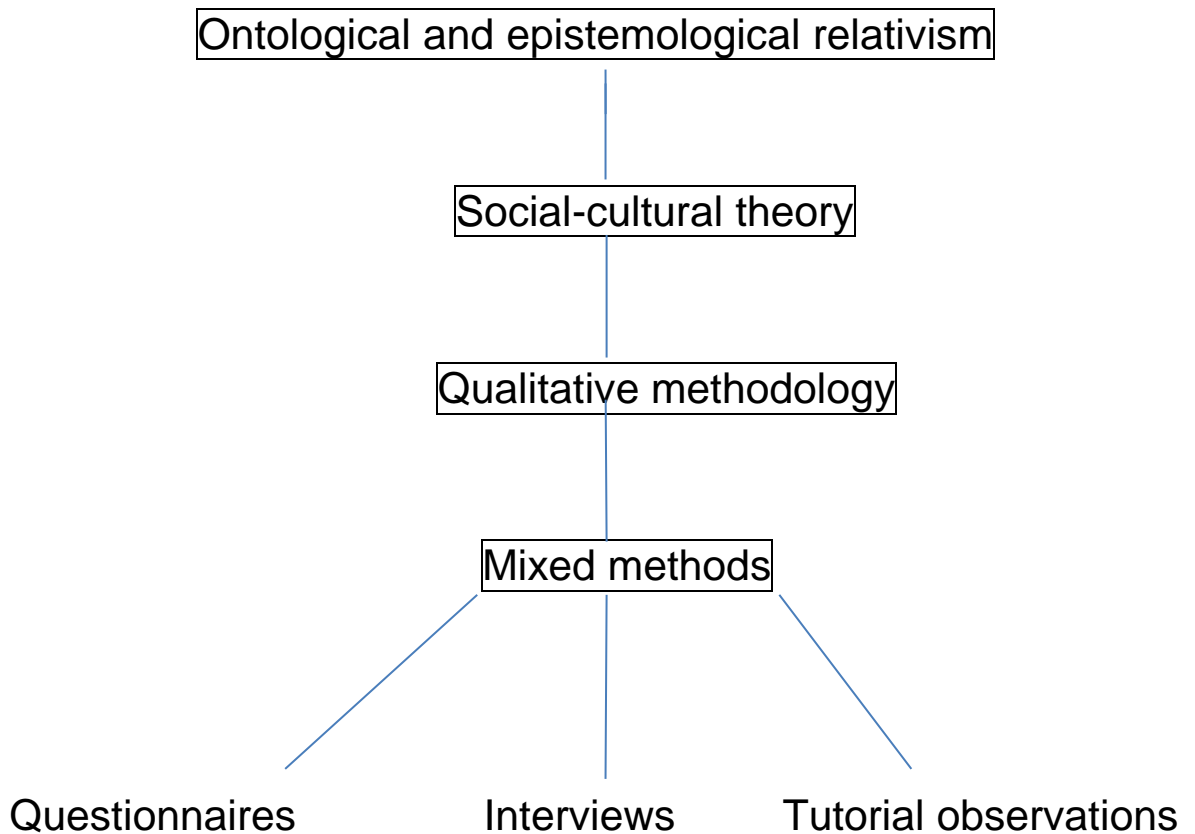
<sup>9</sup> I use the terms 'respondents' and 'participants' interchangeably in this report when referring to questionnaire research. When referring to online observations and interviews, the term 'participants' is preferred.

Chapter 2, I used an adapted version of the Col framework as a template to analyse the interaction between three online presences (see Chapter 2, 2.4.2). In Col-based research studies, the Col framework has been primarily used in quantitative studies to confirm the existence and/or relevance of the three Col presences, using statistical analysis techniques (e.g. Rourke et al., 1999). However, I took a predominantly qualitative approach by analysing tutorial extracts, which provide insights into meanings derived from both questionnaire and interview data. Where (limited) quantification *is* used, the purpose was to triangulate learner perceptions derived from thematic analysis. The techniques used to analyse the observation data are described in section 3.6.2.

The decision to base observations on recorded material was justified by my desire to avoid any influence of my virtual presence on participant behaviour. Recordings are routinely made by tutors of online tutorials so that pedagogical content is available to non-attenders. There was, therefore, abundant material available for unobtrusive observation.

### 3.5 Methodological architecture of my study

The methodological architecture of my study is represented in Figure 6.



**Figure 6: Methodological architecture of my thesis**

### 3.6 Methods of data analysis

In this section, I describe and justify the two main data analysis techniques that I used to analyse research data within the overarching qualitative research paradigm described in the previous sections. Section 3.6.1 discusses thematic analysis techniques applied to questionnaires and interviews whereas in section 3.6.2, I discuss the techniques used to analyse online data: multimodal discourse analysis and qualitative content analysis.

### 3.6.1 Thematic analysis

My overall approach to the analysis of both interview and questionnaire data was qualitative. As stated in the previous section, quantitative data derived from questionnaires was used to provide a perspective on data extracted from open questions which are analysed using qualitative, thematic analysis techniques (Bryman, 2008; Namey et al., 2008; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Dey, 2003). Thematic analysis techniques were also used for analysing data collected from interviews.

Thematic analysis is defined as 'identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.78) and a theme 'captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set' (p.82).

Braun & Clarke (2006, p.78) argue that thematic analysis has been traditionally used as a 'foundational' analytical method in qualitative research' and also that it 'provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data'. However, an acknowledged drawback of thematic analysis is its reliance on interpretation. In contrast with quantitative content analysis, which entails the establishment of pre-created categories and the identification of these categories in the data (Namey et al., 2008), thematic interpretation may 'vary across analysts' (Namey et al., 2008, p.138). Furthermore, there are many ways in which thematic analysis can be carried out (Braun & Clarke, 2006). My rationale for using thematic analysis was my focus on learner perceptions of SP in that I wanted to identify themes across the interviews and open survey questions which represented the thoughts, experiences and feelings of learners in relation to SP in *IlluminateLive*.

My approach to the identification of themes was both 'theoretical' and 'inductive' (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I organised sections of questionnaire and interview text in relation to my research questions, thereby adopting a theoretical approach. However, an inductive element was evidenced in my repeated readings of the questionnaire and interview texts, in which I remained open to themes located in the data, which expanded upon the research questions or provided new insights.

The level of analysis of themes also developed across the two data sets. In my analysis of open survey questions, themes tended to be more 'semantic' or explicit than 'latent' or implicit (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.84). 'Semantic' themes are defined as identified 'within the explicit or surface meanings of the data' as opposed to 'latent' themes which are defined as identifying 'underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations' (2006 p.84). The questionnaires asked respondents about specific issues related to my research questions and therefore the data reflected this semantic approach. However, although the interviews were guided by responses to questionnaires, they provided an opportunity for in-depth discussion which yielded some latent thematic content. An example of this relates to the sub-theme of 'emotional responses and attitudes' (Chapter 5, section 5.4.2).

In terms of what constituted a 'theme' in the analytical process, this was an aspect that I found challenging in my initial attempts to analyse the data. At first I considered multiple instances of text which reflected similar meanings as a theme. Then, I realised that some meanings seemed relevant and important to my research questions, irrespective of the number of times they were repeated. As Braun & Clarke (2006, p.82) state, the relevance of a theme 'is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question'. I therefore identified themes

based on two main criteria. These were repetition, and significance to my research questions. In the end my themes reflected repeated, but not necessarily multiple, instances of significant meanings.

The identification of themes, however, was one stage in the process. Identified themes were then grouped as sub-themes beneath what I have called 'overarching themes'. These are thematic categories at a higher level of organisation than sub-themes and encapsulate the different manifestations of the sub-themes grouped beneath them. They also identify the 'essence of what each (sub) theme is about' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.92). The procedure I adopted in using thematic analysis, including how I grouped themes as sub-themes beneath 'overarching themes', is described in detail in section 3.11.1.

### **3.6.2 Multimodal analysis using an adapted version of the Col framework**

As stated in section 3.4.3, my analysis of tutorial observation data was qualitative, given that I was interested in finding out about SP as a phenomenon and how it was observed to impact on language learning interaction.

I started from the premise that online presence would be evidenced in discourse produced through the use of resources and in different modes. Data analysis was dependent upon a two stage process during which I first developed a coding scheme based on categories and indicators of TP, SP and LLP, in keeping with Col-based research (see 2.4.2) and also based on additional indicators that I was able to observe. The terms 'categories' and 'indicators' are specific to Col coding schemes. *Categories* are higher level, abstract groupings such as 'open communication' within which lower level examples (*indicators*), i.e. 'communicating

freely with others' are grouped. They are not synonymous with the 'themes' referred to in the previous section but rather relate to the specific analytic framework I employed for the analysis of online data.

Following stage one, I then used my coding scheme to identify and analyse tutorial extracts which demonstrated aspects of interaction which seemed relevant to overarching themes and sub-themes produced via my questionnaires and interviews. The procedure is described in sections 3.10.3 and 3.11.3.

The data analysis process was a combination of qualitative content analysis and multimodal discourse analysis. With respect to the former, data analysis was qualitative because I was not focussed on counting the frequency of a given indicator, nor of relating its importance to its frequency (Schreier, 2014). In common with a qualitative content analysis approach, data gathering was both theoretically driven but also inductively linked to the data (Schreier, 2014).

As stated above, my coding scheme was not only based on my reading of research studies but also further developed through observations. SP and TP categories and indicators were modified to reflect the specific nature of language interaction in *IlluminateLive*. However, LLP was a new emergent concept and its categories and indicators were derived from a) my pre-conceptions as a language educator of how LLP might manifest b) observation of language interaction in online tutorials.

Finally, I took the stance that meaning is context-dependent and so tutorial extracts identified for analysis or units of analysis (Zemel et al., 2007), provided a context for the manifestation of SP identified within *IlluminateLive*. These units of



analysis were also 'semantic units' (Murphy & Ciszewska-Carr, 2005, p.551), given that they were related to meanings.

As Herring (2009) argues, content analysis has to adapt to the specific features of online media and an essential aspect of my research context was its multimodality. In the context of *ElluminateLive*, I also needed to include ways of analysing the meanings generated by the multimodal context, using the coding schemes that I developed, based on the Col framework. I did this by drawing on the field of multimodal discourse analysis (MDA).

The basic premise of MDA is described by O'Halloran (2009, p.9) as an analysis of meanings 'arising from semiotic choices which combine in dynamic ever-changing patterns'. This was the analytic approach I adopted with respect to the multimodal aspects of the research environment. Within MDA, there is no commonly agreed analytic method but rather varying analytical approaches depending upon the medium. The approach I adopted was a) necessarily related to the qualitative content analysis techniques I used, and b) specific to the medium, given that analysis was dependent upon how meanings were articulated within *ElluminateLive*. A multimodal perspective to the analysis of online SP, within an overall qualitative content analytical approach, therefore involved an analysis of multimodal discourse. A screenshot of the environment was provided in Figure 5. In section 3.11.3, I describe, in detail, my methods for analysing multimodal data, involving use of an adapted version of the Col framework in conjunction with multimodal discourse analysis.

## Part Two: Data Collection and Analysis

In Part Two of this chapter, I discuss, in detail, the methods used for the collection and analysis of data, related to my three research instruments.

### 3.7 Data collection and analysis: an overview

The following table summarises data collection and analysis methods, mapped to my research questions.

Data	Analysis	Research Questions (3.1)
Questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Thematic analysis of open questions</li><li>➤ Descriptive analysis of closed questions</li></ul>	Q1 and Q2
Interviews	Thematic analysis	Q1 and Q2
Observations of recorded online tutorials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Multimodal discourse analysis</li><li>➤ Qualitative content analysis based on SP categories and indicators and a framework of interacting 'presences' adapted from the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework.</li></ul>	Q3

Table 3: Methods for data collection and analysis

### 3.8 Research participants

Research participants were language students at the Open University, selected from French, German, Italian, Spanish and Chinese modules. Sampling was 'purposive', in that the participants chosen 'illustrate some features or process in which we are interested' (Silverman, 2010, p.306). Students studying at different levels were targeted in order to gain a perspective on how language level might influence perceptions of SP. In addition, data was collected from students of varying ages, first languages and cultures in order to avoid 'selection bias'

(Silverman, 2010, p.308). I had also hoped that a balance of male/female views would be represented in the data but this proved difficult as the majority of questionnaire respondents were female 17/20). This reflects a gender bias towards female students studying Languages at the Open University. However, in an attempt to address this, I selected two male participants for follow-up interviews. Table 4 summarises participant involvement in questionnaires, interviews and online tutorial observations.

<b>Research method</b>	<b>No of participants</b>	<b>Languages represented</b>	<b>Levels of languages<sup>10</sup> represented</b>
<b>Questionnaires</b>	20	French, German, Italian, Spanish, Chinese	Beginners (A2), Intermediate (B1), Upper-intermediate (B2), Advanced (C1)
<b>Interviews</b>	9	German, French, Spanish, Chinese	Beginners, Intermediate, Upper-intermediate, Advanced
<b>Observations of recorded online tutorials</b>	60 <sup>11</sup>	Spanish, French, Italian, German	Beginners, Intermediate, Advanced

**Table 4: Research participants**

### **3.9 Ethics and access issues**

For this study, I complied with the Open University's ethical permissions protocols in terms of (1) student contact, (2) data protection and (3) data storage. To this effect, an application to the OU student research project panel (SRPP) was approved. I have adhered to key ethical issues such as: openness and integrity, informed consent, confidentiality, and protection from harm (Silverman, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Exit levels for each language are shown in brackets, mapped to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

<sup>11</sup> Appendix 9 shows the total number of participants attending each tutorial.

Access issues relate to ethical permissions and the willing participation of research participants (Satar, 2010). 'Overt' access was gained (Silverman, 2010, p.81), i.e. access based on informed consent of participants, including the tutors whose tutor groups were targeted. Indeed the cooperation of tutors was essential, not only as 'gatekeepers' to gain access to students but also because the research process also involved learner perceptions of interaction with tutors. All appropriate permissions were granted by students and tutors. Information and consent forms are shown in appendices 2, 3, 4 and 5.

With respect to data storage, I discuss each of my research instruments in turn (below).

**a) Questionnaires** were returned electronically to my email address, then anonymised and transferred to a secure folder on my computer. Each questionnaire was coded a- t; emails were deleted.

**b) Interviews** were recorded using Skype, *ElluminateLive* and voice recorder. Skype and voice recordings were transferred to my computer as sound files, stored in a secure folder and labelled alphabetically. The interviews conducted via *ElluminateLive* were recorded and then hidden on the website. I was sent a link by IT services so that only I could access them.

I used a transcriber from outside the university. He was sent the sound files via email and asked to a) delete the emails immediately b) store the files securely. He completed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix 6).

**c) Tutorials** were recorded as standard practice by tutors in *ElluminateLive*. This was so that non-attendees could access their content. I then re-recorded selected tutorials using 'Camtasia' (see 3.11.3). Recordings were stored securely on my

computer. I transcribed these myself and removed all student details from extracts presented in this thesis.

### **3.10 Data collection**

In this section, I describe in three sub-sections the data collection techniques and processes I used for three data sets: questionnaires, interviews and online tutorials.

#### **3.10.1 Data collection of questionnaires**

One key advantage of the use of questionnaires for my study was that a broad range of research participants were targeted, given that the distribution of self-completion questionnaires was a relatively straightforward procedure, once issues around the collection and storage of data were resolved (e.g. respecting confidentiality when questionnaires were returned by email).

Questionnaires were distributed and collected electronically as this seemed to be the most efficient way of collecting such data in a distance learning environment. A 'sampling frame' (Plowright, 2011, p.79) was easily accessible, given the fact that my research was located in my work place. The questionnaire was distributed via tutor 'gatekeepers' (Silverman, 2010) to students across 5 languages at 4 levels. Data relating to questionnaires collected by module and level is shown in Appendix 7.

It is difficult to determine the actual response rate because group sizes varied and also, within groups, tutorial attendance is low (around 30%). In addition, some tutors posted the questionnaire on their asynchronous forums and not all students

engage in forum interaction. Despite these factors, the response rate for questionnaires was low and reasons for this are discussed in section 3.13 and Chapter 7, 7.5.2. I received twenty completed questionnaires, which elicited a variety of responses to both open and closed questions.

Closed questions aimed to obtain a quick overview of the field. Types of closed questions were yes/no, scaled and multiple choice, according to the information I wanted to elicit. Open questions were used as a follow on to closed questions in order to probe further and collect qualitative data related to views, perceptions and feelings. The responses to closed questions were collated numerically by totalling the number of responses for each question before entering them into a spreadsheet. Responses to open questions were extracted and entered into a separate word document.

Crucially, the design of the questionnaire mirrored both my research questions and my definitions of SP and LLP in its focus on the SP of the individual learner, that of other learners and the tutor on language learning, and also on interaction and affect and on language learning and practice (see Appendix 1). Additionally, some questions referred specifically to categories and indicators (examples) of SP, identified from Col studies. For example, I asked students about humour, disclosure of personal information, disclosure of feelings, empathy, praise, encouragement and advice.

I am aware of the principles of competent questionnaire design, i.e. clarity, the avoidance of leading questions, lack of ambiguity (Cohen et al., 2011) and the importance of starting with the most straightforward and least sensitive questions (Denscombe, 2010). As I wanted to pilot an initial questionnaire in order to identify

any issues prior to wider dissemination, a pilot study was carried out in April, 2013. The pilot study entailed the distribution of the questionnaire to a group of 6 colleagues, all of whom either tutored on Open University courses or had been Open University students. Changes to the questionnaire following the pilot study entailed:

- a) Modifications to its design. Response boxes had not functioned in its original design so I replaced these with instructions to highlight or underline chosen responses.
- b) A reduction in the number of questions, given that feedback indicated that the pilot questionnaire was too long.
- c) Changes to the wording of some questions. In particular, I eliminated the use of metalanguage and reduced the number of open questions. The rationale for the latter was that more detailed explanations for some answers could be explored via interviews.
- d) The inclusion of an introduction which explained how I conceived of SP in *ElluminateLive*. I needed to clearly define SP so that respondents would understand my questions. This was challenging because it involved my engagement as a researcher with how SP might be experienced by language learners within the online context. My guiding principle for this was that '*Participation with others for social and/or affective purposes*' (my definition of SP) was not synonymous with language interaction (Kehrwald, 2008). Crucially, in order to investigate the impact of SP on language learning in *ElluminateLive*, I differentiated SP from language learning tasks and activities, which may themselves involve the projection of some degree of SP. I did this by referring to the 'purpose' of an activity (see Appendix 1).

### 3.10.2 Data collection of interviews

According to Silverman (2010, p.112) 'no special skills are required' in conducting interviews. I disagree with this. Establishing boundaries, building rapport, recapping and teasing out useful information are skilful activities. For this reason, I found that conducting two pilot interviews was an essential precursor to conducting research using this method. Subsequent to the pilot study, the following changes were made:

**a)** I offered students a choice of medium. *ElluminateLive* was used for the pilot interviews and proved useful, given that participants were familiar with it and recording was unproblematic. However, questionnaire responses had indicated ambivalent attitudes to *ElluminateLive* as a medium for language tutorials and I therefore anticipated that some participants might feel more at ease using alternative media. To this effect, Skype, and telephone were used as well as *ElluminateLive*, and interviews were also recorded using voice and Skype recorders.

**b)** At the start of each pilot interview, I had set clear boundaries with respect to consent, the purpose of the interview, length, how the interview would be conducted and the right of the interviewee to stop the interview at any point or to ask questions<sup>12</sup>. I also checked that the participant and I shared an understanding of what was meant by 'social presence'. However, this introductory phase was scripted for the final interviews: i) to avoid omitting any key information ii) so that I could practise setting the scene in order to put participants at their ease.

**c)** The pilot interviews lasted approximately twice as long as I had originally stated and I realised that I needed to be more accurate about length. It was clear from the recording that some questions were repetitive and could easily be reduced and

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<sup>12</sup> In fact one participant did request that I paused the recording to allow for thinking time.



reframed. I therefore attempted to avoid repetition, whilst maintaining appropriate focus on my research questions.

For the final interviews and in order to elicit a variety of views, I selected both male and female survey respondents of different ages, from all the language levels offered by the Open University and from a variety of languages, including Chinese. Interviewees were volunteers, chosen on the basis of the fullness of their responses to survey questions. Appendix 8 summarises the selection of interview participants and the medium used for the interview.

The final interviews varied in length from thirty to forty-five minutes, depending on the availability of the participants, their willingness and/or their ability to engage, i.e. some participants were more vocal than others in expressing their views. The same protocol was followed in each case with the introduction, previously described. Following this, responses to questionnaires were used as a stimulus for discussion in order to elicit data relevant to my research questions. The interviews were therefore semi-structured although I encouraged participant views which deviated from the questions but informed my research questions.

The interviews were transcribed by an external transcriber and then checked by me. An ad hoc transcription method was employed, rather than a principled one, as would have been necessary if the study had used Discourse Analysis or Conversation Analysis, for example (Silverman, 2010). According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.88): 'As there is no one way to conduct thematic analysis, there is no one set of guidelines to follow when producing a transcript'. They go on to state, however, that any thematic analysis minimally requires 'a rigorous and

thorough 'orthographic' transcript - a 'verbatim' account of all verbal (and sometimes nonverbal - e.g. coughs) utterances' (2006, p.88).

What I aimed to do was to provide an accurate representation of all verbal utterances. I did not focus on the non-verbal as this would involve an unnecessary level of analysis when identifying themes. I was also aware that any analysis of paralinguistic communication could only be partial, given that there was no visual presence in any interview to inform inferences made from non-verbal utterances. Also, non-verbal utterances could arise from personal style or situational nervousness which would have no relevance to views of SP.

With respect to the accuracy of the data collected, techniques such as repeating back what respondents said during interviews were used to achieve 'respondent validation' (Silverman, 2010, p.328). Finally, I am aware of the ethical issues around ensuring the emotional safety of interview participants. This was fostered through offering to pause the interviews at any point, by conducting the interviews in a private place and by assuring confidentiality.

### **3.10.3 Data collection of tutorial observations**

With respect to data collection from tutorial observations, there was no clearly delineated pilot stage, but rather an initial phase during which I gained insight into manifestations of online presences and developed a methodology for the analysis of online data that could be used to triangulate learner perceptions of SP (research question 3). I acknowledge that the procedures described in this section also involved analysis, given that I had to make decisions about what aspects of observed interaction could be categorised as TP, SP and what I have called 'language learning presence' (LLP).

As explained and justified in Chapter 2 (sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2), I used the Col framework as the basis for an adapted version to be employed in the context of *IlluminateLive*. My adapted version replaced CP with LLP. I started from the premise that each of the three Col presences would be found to interact with each other and to be dynamic in nature. The model presented in Chapter 2, section 2.4.2, facilitated the conceptualisation of this interaction.

An important starting point for the development of this model as a research tool was the identification of the ‘*categories*’ and ‘*indicators*’ of the three presences. It was necessary to identify categories and indicators because I needed to separate them out in observed interaction before I could explore the possible influence of SP on LLP.

### **3.10.3.1 Categories and Indicators**

#### **a) SP**

With respect to my development of a coding scheme for SP, I was aware that its categories and indicators have varied in the Col literature. For example, in the original Col framework, SP was described as having three categories of indicators. These were affective, interactive and cohesive (Rourke et al., 1999) or ‘Emotional Expression’, ‘Open Communication’ and ‘Group cohesion’, according to Garrison et al. (2000, p.89). Therefore, even as the model was introduced, there were variations in how the original authors presented SP.

Over time, both categories and indicators of SP have been modified in the research literature according to both the focus and context of the research conducted. For example, Swan & Shih (2005) retained the original categories but

produced an expanded set of indicators, based on their study of the development of SP in online (asynchronous) discussions. On the other hand, from a study of student perceptions of SP in an asynchronous context, Kim (2011, p.77) adapted the categories to include 'mutual attention and support', related to the affective category of the original Col framework.

My decision to accept the original affective, interactive and cohesive Col categories as a starting point for a SP coding scheme was influenced by the work of Arbaugh et al. (2008), who validated these categories through the development of a survey to test the Col framework. This survey was subsequently used across different organisations and accurately identified the Col categories of SP (Swan et al., 2008). In addition, the Col categories represented my understanding of SP in terms of their emphasis on the social and the affective. I also felt that they were broad enough to facilitate the categorisation of multiple indicators. I had originally considered the inclusion of the category of 'mutual attention and support' (Kim, 2011, p.77) but later abandoned it, as I felt that SP indicators within this category could be effectively subsumed within the 'affective' category.

In the Col framework, the affective category was linked to the expression of emotion to foster connectedness and presence (Rourke et al, 1999). The interactive category concerned responsiveness and 'a willingness to sustain and prolong contact' (Rourke et al., 2001, p.55). The cohesive category related to communication which would 'build and sustain a sense of group commitment' (Rourke et al, 1999, p.56).

Within my three chosen, affective, interactive and cohesive categories, the selection of indicators was influenced by my reading of research studies and then

validated and expanded upon through my observation of tutorials. I therefore remained open to the emergence of other possible indicators of SP from the data. An additional category 'management of the multimodal environment' was also included, given that SP necessarily involved the use of tools within a specific multimodal context. Table 5 shows my SP coding scheme. Where indicators appeared first in other research studies, examples are given in this table. Additional indicators in Table 5 were derived inductively from the data.

<b>Social Presence</b>	<b>Categories from Rourke et al. (2001)</b>	<b>Indicators (examples). (Written/spoken modes will be in TL or English)</b>
	<b>Affective</b>	<b>Expressing/responding to:</b>
		humour (Rourke et al.,1999;Swan, 2005; Satar, 2010)
		empathy (Gunawardena,1995; Swan, 2003; Kim, 2011))
		appreciation (Rourke et al.,1999)
		self-disclosure (Rourke et al.,1999)
		support (Kim, 2011)
		praise (Rourke et al.,1999; Satar, 2010)
		advice (Lomicka & Lord, 2007)
		encouragement (Lomicka & Lord, 2007)
		Reassurance
		other positive feelings
		negative feelings e.g. anxiety/confusion
	<b>Interactive</b>	Dominating
		Being silent
		Communicating freely with others (Garrison et al., 2000)
		Sharing information about a variety of topics
		Expressing opinions/views
	<b>Cohesive</b>	Working collaboratively with others (Garrison et al., 2000)
		Building inclusive relationships (incl. using inclusive language vocatives/inclusive pronouns etc.) (Rourke et al.,1999; Kim, 2011)
		Community-building
		Acknowledging others
		Agreeing
		Taking an interest in others
		Welcoming others
		Asking how others feel
		Expressing/responding to greetings (Swan & Shih, 2005)
	<b>Management of the multimodal environment</b>	Using the online resources for affective, interactive and/or cohesive purposes

**Table 5: Social presence categories and indicators**

## **b) TP**

In terms of its categories and indicators, there has been a greater consensus in the research for TP than for SP. Three principal categories, i.e. management of instruction, the facilitation of discourse, and direct instruction were identified in the original Col framework (Garrison et al., 2000) and have been used in recent studies, for example, Wisneski et al. (2015). However, although I used these categories as a starting point to develop a coding scheme for TP, I found that I needed to develop both categories and indicators which accurately reflected my definition of TP and its observed manifestations in online language learning tutorials. In addition, as for SP (above) and LLP (below), I included a category specific to the management of the multimodal environment. Table 6 (below) shows my coding scheme for TP.

Teaching Presence	Categories	Indicators (examples). (Written/spoken modes will be in TL or English)
	Management of learning content	Selecting, sequencing and timing of language learning activities
	Management of resources	Selecting, sequencing, timing and exploitation of resources
	Management of the multimodal environment	Facilitating and moderating use of tools of the environment
		Using the tools of the environment for teaching purposes
	Facilitation of language learning	Setting up activities and tasks
		Monitoring activities and tasks
		Organising and selecting groups and pairs
		Using questioning techniques and answering questions
		Communicating freely or openly e.g. discussing, asking for opinions etc.
	Language Teaching (direct instruction)	Presenting, explaining, modelling aspects of language
		Using error correction techniques
		Giving feedback to individuals or groups
		Giving examples in the TL
		Translating
		Revising lesson content
	Talk/Advice/Explanation about language learning and course content	Explaining language or course content
		Advising learners about language, language learning or course content
		Giving information about country or culture

**Table 6: Teaching presence categories and indicators**

### c) LLP

As LLP was an emergent construct, I based its categories and indicators on my prior knowledge as a language educator, validated by what I observed in online tutorials. The coding scheme shown in Table 7 reflects broad categories of observed language activity and illustrative indicators, expressed as language functions. It does not differentiate according to level. As would be expected, TL interaction increased with level, and some LLP indicators shown in Table 7, i.e.



‘discussing and debating’ were not observed at beginner level, owing to their linguistic complexity.

Language Learning Presence	Categories	Indicators (examples) (Written/spoken modes will be in TL or English)
	Interaction for the purpose of language learning	Doing skills-based tasks and activities, including pair work and group work e.g.
		• Asking and answering questions
		• Discussing and debating
		• Expressing opinions
		• Communicating freely
		• Agreeing and disagreeing
		• Seeking clarification
		Doing grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation tasks and activities, including pair work and group work e.g.
		• Gap-filling
		• Asking and answering questions
		• Seeking clarification
		• Manipulating whiteboard content
	Talk about language, culture and course content in either the target language or English	Asking and answering questions
		Clarifying and seeking clarification
		Exchanging information or knowledge
	Management of the multimodal environment	Requesting clarification or help in the use of tools
		Answering questions about technology; registering problems
		Using the tools of the environment for language learning purposes

**Table 7: Language learning presence categories and indicators**

There are several aspects of the above coding schemes which require further explanation:

- a) As for the Col framework, the list of indicators within each category is illustrative but not definitive.

- b)** I am aware that the categorisation of the indicators as TP, SP or LLP is not clear-cut. For example, praise and encouragement are aspects of teacher behaviour which are essentially linked to teacher feedback. These aspects could, therefore, be categorised as TP. However, for the purposes of this study, I categorised these aspects as indicators of SP, given that the primary purpose of praise and encouragement could be said to be the development of positive affect.
- c)** Some indicators seemed to belong to more than one presence. For example, 'communicating freely' was sometimes observed to be an indicator of SP if the primary purpose appeared to be social, or of language learning presence when students were, for example, discussing or debating in the TL as part of a language learning activity. Communicating freely could also represent both SP and LLP simultaneously.
- d)** Some TP indicators were not necessarily linked to tutors. SP indicators could be projected by tutors and students. LLP indicators were essentially linked to students.
- e)** In contrast to the Col framework, some negative indicators of SP were identified in the data, relating to the expression of negative feelings e.g. confusion or to negative behaviours (dominating). Conversely, I also observed instances of silence, which usually, but not always, appeared to have a negative impact on group cohesion.

The following sub-section completes section 3.10.3 by giving practical details of the procedure I adopted for the collection of data relevant to the schemes I developed.

### 3.10.3.2 Data collection procedure

The procedure I adopted contained the following three steps:

**Step 1:** I watched *IlluminateLive* recordings from 2 language tutorials, making notes on how the 3 presences manifested in multimodal language learning interaction.

**Step 2:** I expanded my observations to include tutorials in French, Italian, Spanish and German at beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. Whilst watching the tutorials, I noted down observed indicators of SP, LLP and TP.

**Step 3:** I mapped the indicators for SP, TP and LLP against their respective categories onto three templates (see Tables 5, 6 and 7). With the exception of LLP, the final templates contained a mixture of indicators derived from previous Col studies, verified through my observations, and new indicators identified from observations. With respect to LLP, I completed the template by developing categories and indicators of this presence from what I observed, influenced by my knowledge as a language teacher. The three templates for SP, TP and LLP then became the coding schemes that I would use in my analysis of tutorial extracts.

Although I have described this process as linear, it was, in fact, iterative. Different versions of the coding scheme were developed, used and modified, based on the observations. Appendix 9 provides details of the tutorials I observed. I varied level, tutor, gender and L1 of tutor, and stage of the module in order to increase the reliability of the schemes. It should be noted that the language and level of observation were both restricted and facilitated by my own linguistic competence.

### **3.11 Data analysis**

In this section, I describe my analysis of data from my three research methods, giving examples.

#### **3.11.1 Survey questions and interview data**

##### **a) Analysis of closed survey questions**

As my overarching methodological approach was qualitative, any statistical analysis of closed research questions was used to develop a superficial understanding of patterns in learner perceptions as a springboard for further exploration through the open questions to which each closed question related (Silverman, 2010). Data collected was counted, and presented in graphs and tables, generated through the use of Excel spreadsheets. I did not use quantitative statistical analysis techniques but rather described and compared the data.

The results of my analysis of closed survey questions are summarised in Chapter 4, Table 21. In this table, I link my findings, which I refer to as 'patterns', to overarching themes and sub-themes derived from the open questions to which they relate.

##### **b) Thematic analysis of open survey questions**

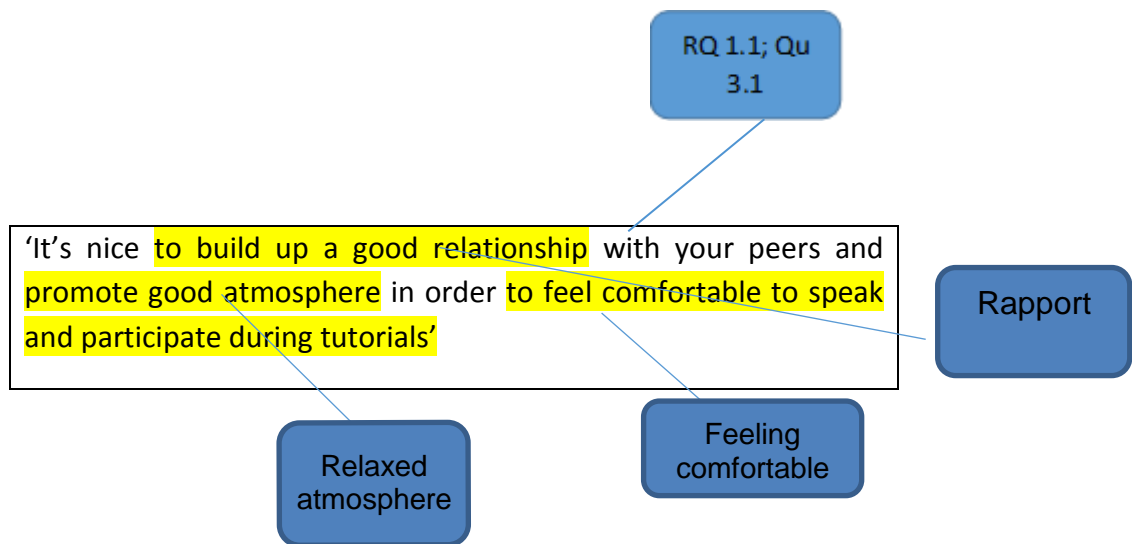
The procedure I adopted for the analysis of both open survey questions and interview data is summarised in Table 8 and was based on the stages of thematic analysis described by Braun & Clarke (2006). The stages are represented consecutively but the process was iterative as I moved backwards and forwards between stages to check my analysis.

Number of Stage	Stage	Further Information
1	<b>Data familiarisation</b>	Multiple readings of the data and the identification of initial ideas
2	The generation of <b>categories</b> and <b>codes</b>	Categories were the research questions and questionnaire questions Codes reflected text content identified as significant with respect to the research questions and questionnaire questions
3	The identification of <b>themes</b> from the <b>coded</b> text	The organisation of coded text into potential themes
4	Reviewing the identified themes	Working back across the data to check that the identified themes accurately represented participant views
5	Defining and naming of <b>overarching themes</b>	Ongoing analysis of the themes and the clustering of these as <b>sub themes</b> beneath <b>overarching themes</b> which captured meanings across the data and related to the <b>sub themes</b> .

**Table 8: The stages of thematic analysis for open survey questions and interviews**

With respect to the open survey questions, I analysed the data manually. This was justified because I wanted to analysis data from the closed questions alongside the open questions which they supported.

Once I had familiarised myself with the data by reading and re-reading the questionnaires (Stage 1, Table 8), I then entered all the open questions into a word table and categorised the data with respect to the research question and survey question to which it referred. Following this, I identified codes related to the categories (Stage 2, Table 8). For example, a category named: **RQ 1.1 Qu 3.1** related to research question 1.1 and section 1 question 3 of the survey. Examples of codes were **feeling comfortable**, **rapport** and **relaxed atmosphere**. Figure 7 gives an example of how I coded parts of a quoted extract (Stage 2).



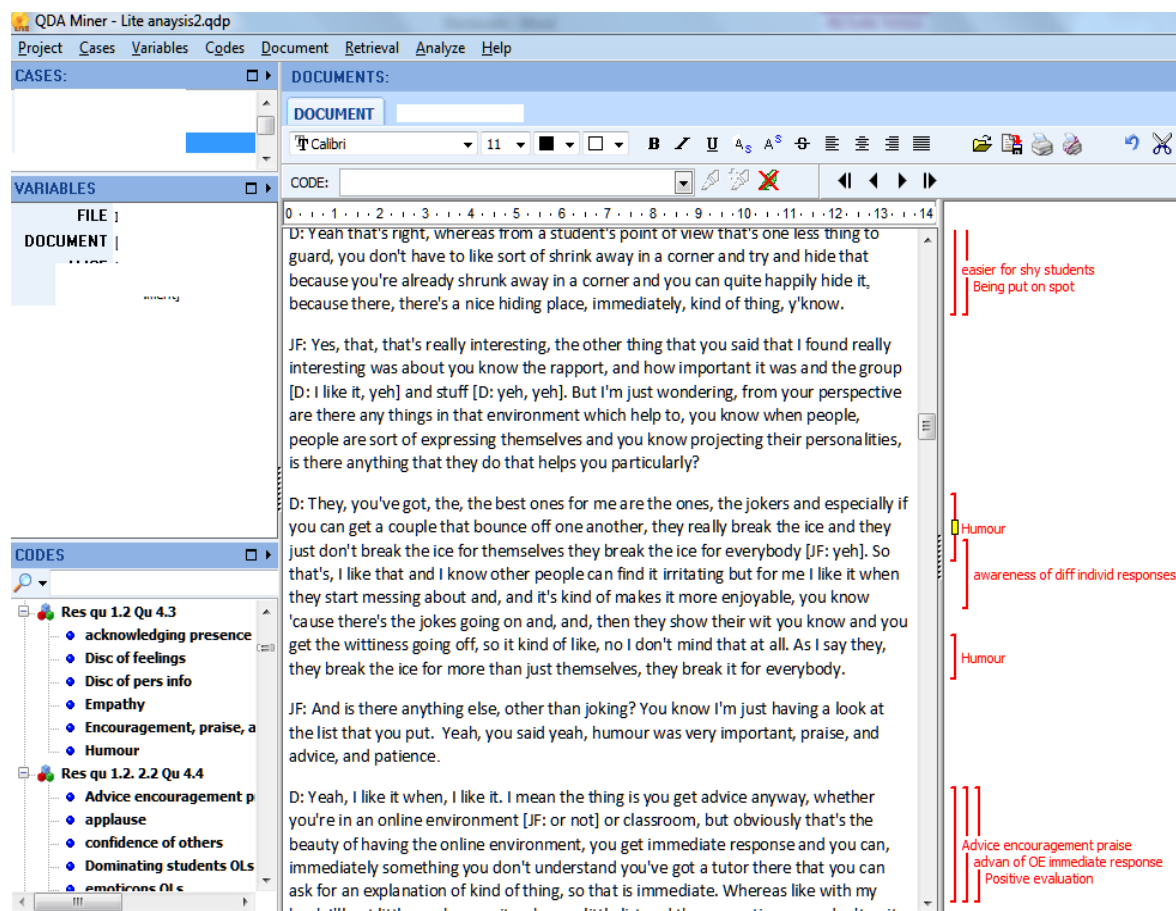
**Figure 7: Stage 2: coding a text extract**

A theme related to these codes was then identified via repeated readings of open question responses as **feeling relaxed and comfortable with others helps language learning** (Stage 3, Table 8). Following this, I reviewed coded extracts to ensure that the themes accurately represented respondent views (Stage 4, Table 8). The final stage (Stage 5, Table 8) entailed the identification of an overarching theme beneath which I grouped the themes as sub-themes. **The importance of SP of other learners and the individual learner for LLP** is an example of an overarching theme. Stage 5 also involved the reviewing of all overarching themes and their **sub themes** to ensure that **sub themes** were appropriately ordered and named beneath each **overarching theme**.

### **c) Thematic analysis of interview data**

With respect to the interviews, familiarisation with the data was carried out manually via repeated readings of interview transcripts (Stage 1, Table 8). Again, this gave me an overview of ideas. For example, it was clear that respondents valued SP but SP was not always viewed as a positive phenomenon and this seemed to depend upon its varying manifestations. My decision to then use the

software tool, QDA Miner Lite, to closely analyse the interview data was based on the fact that this tool facilitated the analysis of large sections of transcribed text. A screenshot is shown in Figure 8.



**Figure 8: QDA Miner Lite**

The text was then categorised in relation to the research questions and cross-referenced to the survey questions (Stage 2, Table 8). These categories were the code families within which the codes were grouped. For example, an extract of data coded **Humour** was grouped within the category: **Res Qu1.2; Qu 4.3**, and related to the 2nd part of my first research question and to Section 3, Question 4 of the questionnaire. The software facilitated the analytic process as I was able to mark up the transcriptions by clicking on the same code wherever I found that an extract of text expressed similar meanings.

I was then able to export extracts of categorised, coded text into an Excel spreadsheet. This was a useful function of the tool as all categorized extracts were grouped together. Themes were identified from multiple readings of coded text (Stage 3, Table 8). The theme of **humour** was identified from text extracts that I coded, for example, **humour; SP of other learners (humour); humour breaks the ice**. Following this, I reviewed all coded extracts to ensure that the themes accurately reflected them (Stage 4, Table 8). The final stage (Stage 5, Table 8) entailed the identification of an overarching theme beneath which I grouped the themes, which I designated as **sub-themes**. The overarching theme relating to the sub-theme **humour** was **helpful and unhelpful SP**.

### **3.11.2 Linking data from surveys and interviews**

As previously stated, the findings of the survey were used for further exploration through the nine interviews. Survey responses therefore provided a map of the territory to be explored in greater depth in the interviews. The overarching themes and sub-themes from surveys provided a preliminary structure for the interviews but, I also allowed space for interviewees to develop their own thoughts and meanings. The final overarching themes and their sub-themes presented in Chapter 5, Figure 28, therefore represent the key findings of interviews, informed by survey data. These findings expand on and give meaning to the survey data, which can be regarded as preliminary in the data analysis process. It is these findings that I go on to use as a guiding framework for my analysis of online tutorials. The procedure I adopted for the latter is described in the following section.



### 3.11.3 Analysis of recorded online tutorials

Analysis of recorded online tutorials involved the identification of tutorial extracts which a) triangulated data from interviews in relation to the role and function of SP b) extended my understanding of SP in multimodal online language learning contexts. I repeatedly watched the recordings of online tutorials, originally selected for the development of my coding schemes. The following procedure was adopted:

**Step 1:** I used 'Camtasia' to record the online recordings. This tool facilitated the selection of extracts of interaction for close analysis and the transcription of interactive sequences. Once recorded, tutorials could be paused and rewound to precise points in the interaction where exact timings were given. This function is shown in the bottom part of the screenshot, Figure 9.

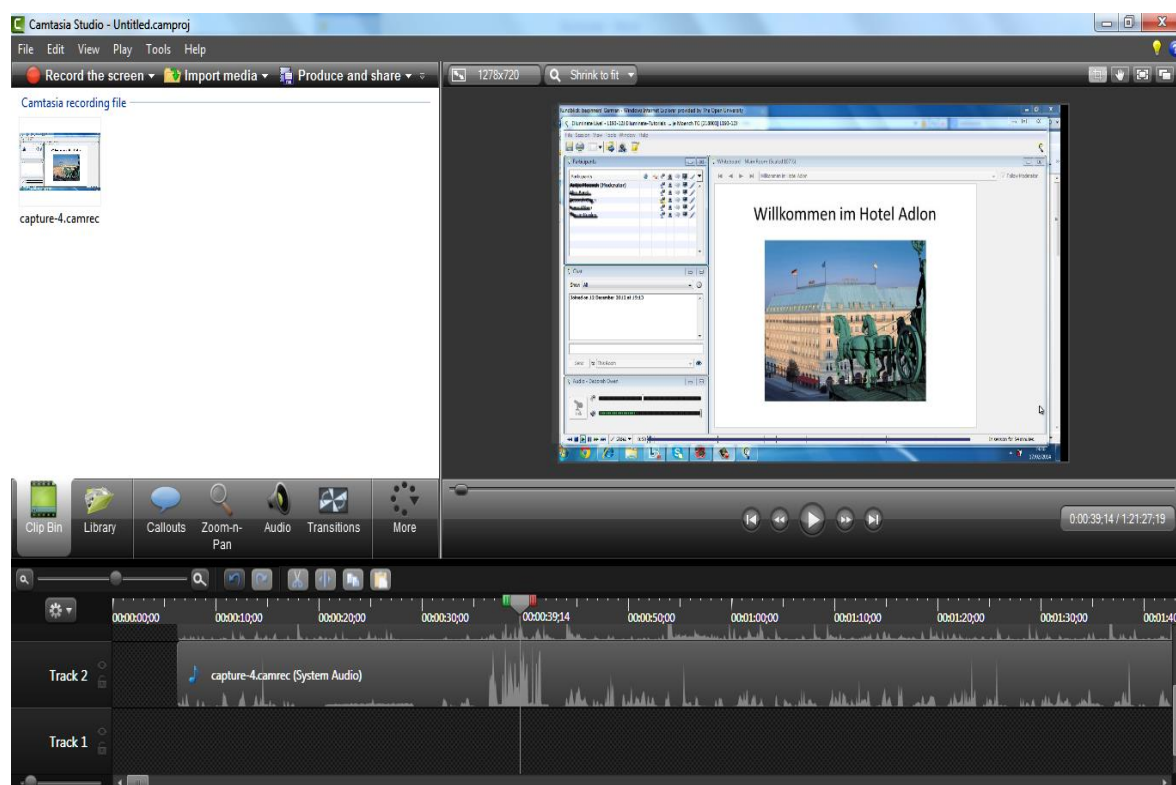


Figure 9: Camtasia

**Step 2:** I identified extracts which demonstrated aspects of the interaction which seemed relevant to themes identified from interviews. In terms of the identification

of the boundaries of each unit of analysis, this is a recognised problem in content analysis (Rourke et al., 1999). I dealt with this by working with semantic units or units of meaning. These were located on the basis of their illustration of a key aspect of SP observed. The boundaries of the units were then set according to whether or not the selected unit sufficiently represented the example of SP contextualised within interaction. This involved close observation of material prior to and following the unit of analysis to ensure that I had not missed any significant material which would skew the analysis of the identified unit.

**Step 3:** I transcribed and analysed these tutorial extracts in relation to:

- i) the particular manifestation of SP observed
- ii) any interaction between the 3 presences which seemed significant with respect to my research questions
- iii) interaction specifically relevant to the multimodal environment, which seemed significant to i) and ii), above
- iv) The significance of i), ii) and iii), above, in relation to sub-themes and over-arching themes identified in interviews

The process described under Step 3 is demonstrated in my analysis of online data in Chapter 6.

An acknowledged complexity of multimodal analysis is the transcription of interaction which may be simultaneous, instantaneous and produced through the use of a variety of tools, each with different possibilities for communication (O'Halloran, 2009). Textual transcription of what is said or written and at what point, will capture interaction through language but will fail to capture how presence is communicated via the multiple affordances within the environment. Indeed as Baldry and Thibault (2006) emphasise, meaning must be considered as

arising from the interaction of these affordances. Whilst I am aware of the availability of transcription software ('Transana' (<http://www.transana.org/>), for example), I needed to develop ways of transcribing which were specific to and reflected the focus of my study.

According to Satar (2010, p.100), 'a diversity of techniques abound' for transcribing multimodal data and will vary according to the environment. Lamy and Hampel, (2007, p.186) describe the advantages and disadvantages of various techniques which include textual transcripts, screenshots, matrices, system logs or a combination of the four. For the purposes of my study, I used simple word tables which showed the tools of the environment, the interactive turns including overlapping interactions, and any non-verbal elements. Transcription was informed by the content of a matrix used in other multimodal studies (Lamy, 2012, Chanier & Vetter, 2006). Transcription symbols were adapted from Silverman (2010). A list of symbols and a key to abbreviations used in transcription are located in appendices 10 and 11, respectively.

### **3.12 Issues of validity and reliability**

Research aimed at gathering perceptions of SP may produce data which has internal validity, i.e. accurately representing 'the phenomena to which it refers' (Hammersley et al., 2003, p.27), but may not necessarily be reliable, that is generalisable beyond the study. In fact, according to Lamy and Hampel (2007, p.76), 'research findings about learner experience are ambiguous, often impressionistic and not necessarily transferable'. However, strategies such as 'inter-rater reliability' (Silverman, 2010, p.286) may be used to increase reliability, and I drew on the skills of colleagues to check the reliability of my analysis of the

three data sets. An example of the importance of using interrater checks relates to my interpretation of interaction as humour in online data analysis. This was problematic because of the different discourse functions humorous interaction may perform and the input of a colleague was helpful to me in identifying these. I discuss humour in greater depth in Chapter 7, Section 7.3.

With respect to validity, I attempted to make the research process as transparent and as rigorous as possible. I aimed for validity through the use of a variety of research methods to triangulate the anonymised data collected and also through the use of repeatedly reviewing the data and applying my methodology in a systematic way. Strategies such as paraphrasing and summarising the words of interview participants during interviews were also used to ensure that I accurately captured the intended meaning of interviewees.

One key issue with respect to validity is bias and the following reflections summarise some aspects of this:

- As stated in section 3.3, I can never be free of my socio-cultural perspectives and need to retain awareness of this.
- As my research was conducted within my place of work, my findings necessarily reflect some ‘insider’ bias (Hellowell, 2006). An ‘insider’ is defined as ‘an individual who possesses a priori intimate knowledge of the community and its members’ (Hellowell, 2006, p.484). Perhaps a disadvantage of being an insider in my case was that I was aware of my own preconceptions with respect to the topic of my research, which were formed due to my role as a Staff Tutor with responsibility for staff

development. However, awareness enabled challenge, and I attempted to retain reflexivity throughout the research process.

In addition, Hellowell (2006) indicates that 'insider/outsider' perspectives exist on a continuum as researchers have varying roles within organisations, which may impact, for example, on power relations with research participants. In my current OU role, I had no direct contact or existing relationships with student participants; however, some tutors were familiar to me. The latter may have influenced their willingness to be involved in my research, which I addressed by avoiding all coercion and by adhering to university ethics procedures. Finally, Hellowell (2006) highlights that insider/outsider perspectives have advantages as well as disadvantages for the research process. Prior knowledge of the OU and of the multimodal context of my study were no doubt helpful to me in understanding the research environment. My role as 'insider' also facilitated access to research participants.

- I am aware of the 'Hawthorne Effect' (Landsberger, 1958), that is the distorting effect on research findings as a result of the knowledge of participants that they are being researched. One way of mitigating against this was by analysing pre-recorded tutorial recordings.

### **3.13 Methodological issues**

With respect to the questionnaire, it is difficult to determine the response rate for reasons given in Section 3.10.1. However, it was disappointing to receive only twenty completed questionnaires, given that it was distributed to students across eleven modules at four levels. In addition, there was selective non-completion of a

minority of questions by respondents. For example, when asked to comment on the effects of fluctuations of SP of the tutor, only one comment was given. In its final version, therefore, the questionnaire may have been too long, with too many open questions and, in retrospect, I wondered whether it was the most effective research instrument to gather data about a complex social phenomenon. On the other hand, the data collected provided a response to my research questions and also produced insights which I was able to explore further, and in detail, in the interviews.

There were methodological issues related to the analysis of online data which remain unresolved. There is, to date, no prescribed way of analysing multimodal data and my attempt to synthesise an analytic approach based on the identification of presence indicators with an analysis of use of multimodal resources was problematic. The main issue lay in the differentiation between presences, their categories and indicators. The identification of a presence projected via any given non-verbal resource was not always clear-cut, given that non-verbal resources may perform various discourse functions.

In addition, the use of the coding schemes (Tables 5, 6 and 7) to differentiate between presences required a decision about where to set boundaries in the text of each extract to denote where one presence ended and the next one began. The following extract is part of the longer *Extract 1, Chapter 6*. Green denotes LLP and yellow, SP. It could be argued that the primary purpose of communication is to seek clarification (LLP). Therefore, the whole extract (below) might be coded as LLP. However, following the conjunction 'because' the student appears to express confusion (negative SP). I therefore coded this extract as LLP (seeking clarification), and SP (expressing confusion).

'Yes (.) erm (.) I was wondering err we covered a lot of err these err different (.) these variations for how to say how you are feeling but where all this in the grammar book or the lesson one because I almost feel the lesson is from the colloquial Italian (.) but I haven't found all these ways of err expressing things'

### **Part of Extract 1, Chapter 6**

My study was a first attempt to adapt the Col framework to multimodal language learning contexts. This adapted framework was a rough tool, which could be refined in future research studies. The methodology I adopted to identify presences based on the purpose of communication may also need to be further developed and adapted in further studies.

Finally, issues related to online analysis were also encountered in capturing the complexity of multimodal interaction via the method of transcription that I selected. The use of 'Camtasia' was helpful in this respect but transcription was a lengthy, arduous process and I had several attempts at capturing each tutorial extract.

### **3.14 Consideration of alternative methods for both data collection and data analysis**

I am aware that there were other choices I could have made with respect to research methods, both for the collection and analysis of data. With respect to data collection, I considered and then rejected stimulated recall and the use of focus groups. With respect to the analysis of data, I had originally explored discourse-centred online ethnography (DCOE) (Androutsopoulos, 2008) as a viable approach. Below I discuss each of these possible choices in turn.

### **a) Stimulated Recall**

Stimulated recall (SR) is an introspective method of data collection increasingly used to elicit learner reflections on their thoughts whilst engaged in a specific activity (Gass and Mackey, 2000). Research participants typically watch themselves performing an activity shortly after the event as a stimulus for reflection. A possible use of SR for my study was therefore to play back recordings of tutorials and discuss these with students.

However, it could be argued that if the same group of students are used for questionnaires and then SR, the process of SR might be influenced by the students' engagement with the survey questions. In addition, Gass and Mackey (2000) describe some problems inherent in introspective methods such as stimulated recall. For example, the act of recall may lead to a representation of the original behaviour which is not accurate. This occurs because human beings tend to explain their actions but may well be out of touch with what motivates them. For these reasons, therefore, I decided to use questionnaires and follow-up interviews to gather learner perceptions.

### **b) Focus groups**

Also with respect to data collection, focus groups are group interviews which involve the facilitated discussion of the object of research (Burgess et al., 2006). My reason for rejecting this method was that all interviews took place at a distance and, apart from the practical considerations of finding an appropriate medium to support group interviews (i.e. I had previously experienced problems with connectivity in Skype group interviews and I did not want to restrict participants to using *lluminateLive*), I was also aware that I did not know the interviewees well



enough to select a group which would be balanced in terms of power relations and there was therefore the risk that some students may dominate.

### **c) Discourse-centred online ethnography (DCOE)**

My study has several features in common with DCOE (Androutsopoulos, 2008). DCOE requires extended study (via observation) of communicative processes and the semiotic articulation of these processes within an online context (Androutsopoulos, 2008). Similarly, my study focusses on interactive processes within which SP is communicated via a range of context-specific semiotic resources. In addition, in common with DCOE, my study uses online observations and interviews as research instruments.

However, in line with discourse analysis and conversation analysis, DCOE is focussed on the detailed linguistic analysis of text. It is therefore more established as a method in asynchronous contexts. In addition, the focus of my study was not discourse, per se, but rather the nature and role of SP in language tutorials. The analysis of forms of discourse was an aspect of this, but used as a vehicle for developing an understanding of online SP in a bespoke multimodal, language learning environment.

## **3.15 Final comments on research methodology**

This chapter has explored in detail the methodological approach to my study of SP. It has also described and justified the data collection and analysis methods that I used to address my research questions.

Reflexivity in writing a thesis is defined by Hellowell (2006, p.483) as: 'this ability objectively to stand outside one's own writing, and to be reflexive about it and about one's own relation to it'. My reflexivity as a researcher is demonstrated through the refinement of the research process based on experience derived from pilot studies, and awareness of the limitations of the methods I have used, not only for data collection, but also for data analysis. I have never lost sight of the influence of my own socio-cultural background, and personal stance in relation to the epistemological and ontological framework of this study. In view of this, I have tried to justify openly and clearly the different positions I adopted as a researcher at each stage of the research process. In particular, I believe that the methods described and justified in this chapter demonstrate an analytical rigour which I apply to the analysis of data in the following chapters.

## Chapter 4: Results of the questionnaire data

### Introduction

In this chapter I present and discuss the results of the questionnaire data. Responses to closed questions are presented in tables and graphs, whereas themes derived from open questions are shown in tables alongside example quotations. The data is cross-referenced to the survey questions (SQs) and also to my research questions (RQs) in Tables 9 and 15. The data presented in this chapter is related to the wider literature in Chapter 7.

Sections 4.1 and 4.2 present and discuss data which is primarily relevant to RQs 1 and 2 respectively. However where data may be pertinent to both RQs (for example, findings relating to the use of online tools), this is indicated in the sub-section heading. Where data from open questions is discussed, themes were preliminary and represent stage 3 of the thematic analysis process (Table 7, Chapter 3). These themes were then reviewed, refined and re-categorised as overarching or sub-themes (stages 4 and 5, Table 8, Chapter 3). Themes are numbered according to the open question to which they relate and not consecutively throughout this chapter.

Section 4.3, Table 21 provides a summary of overarching and sub-themes from qualitative, thematic analysis of open survey questions. Quantitative findings derived from closed questions are also presented in this summary, linked appropriately to the themes which they support. Where data collected relates to the CoI presences, I use the abbreviations SP and LLP. In addition, the survey questions specifically asked about the SP of the teacher. I therefore use the

abbreviation TSP (teacher social presence) to differentiate between the SP of learners and that of the tutor.

## 4.1 Research Question 1

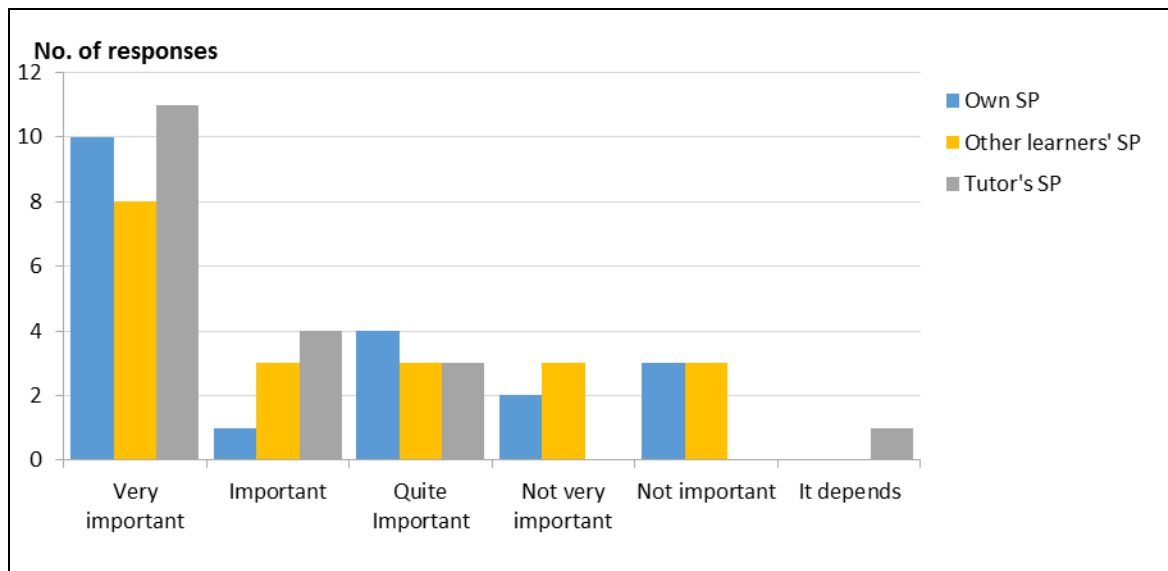
RQ1 and its sub-questions are mapped to the survey questions (SQs) in Table 9, below. Data relevant to this RQ is presented in sub-sections 4.1.1- 4.1.4 of this chapter.

<b>RQ1. According to the perceptions of learners, how and to what extent do aspects of SP influence language learning presence (LLP) in online language tutorials?</b>	<b>Survey Questions</b>
<b>RQ 1.1</b> How and to what extent do aspects of the SP of the individual influence their ability to learn and practise language in online language tutorials?	3.1, 3.7 3.8, 3.9
<b>RQ 1.2</b> How and to what extent do aspects of the SP of other learners influence the ability to learn and practise the language of both the individual learner and the group in online language tutorials?	4.1, 4.2 4.3, 4.4 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8
<b>RQ 1.3</b> How and to what extent do aspects of the SP of the tutor influence the ability to learn and practise the language of both the individual learner and the group in online language tutorials?	5.1, 5.2 5.3, 5.4 5.5, 5.6 5.7, 5.8

**Table 9: RQ 1 mapped to survey questions**

### 4.1.1 Survey questions 3.1, 4.1, 5.1; RQs 1.1, 1.2, 1.3

I asked learners how they rated the importance of the social participation (SP) of themselves, other learners and the tutor for learning and practising the language. The term ‘social participation’ was used as a synonym for SP, as explained in the introduction to the questionnaire (Appendix 1). Data collected from this question is presented in Figure 10.



**Figure 10: The importance of SP of the individual learner, other learners and the tutor for LLP**

There were similar ratings for the importance of SP of the individual learner and of other learners in that 15/20 and 14/20 respondents, respectively, rated SP as 'very important', 'important' or 'quite important'. Perceptions of the importance of the SP of the tutor are the most highly rated as 18/19 respondents (there was one non-response) rated this as 'very important', 'important' or 'quite important' with one respondent selecting 'it depends'. This respondent commented that the tutor's SP was more important at lower linguistic levels. With respect to how SP impacts on LLP, Table 10 shows the themes derived from respondent comments.

<b>Importance of individual SP and that of other learners</b>	
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Related comments (examples)</b>
<b>1.</b> Importance of SP for speaking and participating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'If students don't participate and there are long silences, language learning is problematic'</li> <li>➤ 'It is very important in order to improve the speaking/oral skills and participate with other students'</li> <li>➤ 'Good interactivity means better learning'</li> </ul>
<b>2.</b> Feeling relaxed and comfortable helps language learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'I think it helps when we encourage each other. We learn better when we are relaxed, and the social element helps that'</li> <li>➤ 'It's nice to build up a good relationship with your peers and promote good atmosphere in order to feel comfortable to speak and participate during tutorials'</li> </ul>
<b>Importance of SP of the tutor</b>	
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Related comments (examples)</b>
<b>3.</b> The tutor leads the way for SP and LLP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'The tutor needs to be the instigator and mediator – without her the stronger or quicker students may monopolise the session'</li> <li>➤ 'Students follow the tutors lead'</li> <li>➤ 'My tutor was the one sure element in social interaction in French'</li> </ul>
<b>4.</b> Creating a positive atmosphere aids language learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'It's part of the skills of a teacher. If she is rude or not attentive to the mood of the students we are less likely to learn'</li> <li>➤ 'The tutor needs to make the students feel relaxed and boost their confidence'</li> </ul>

**Table 10: The importance of SP and TSP for LLP**

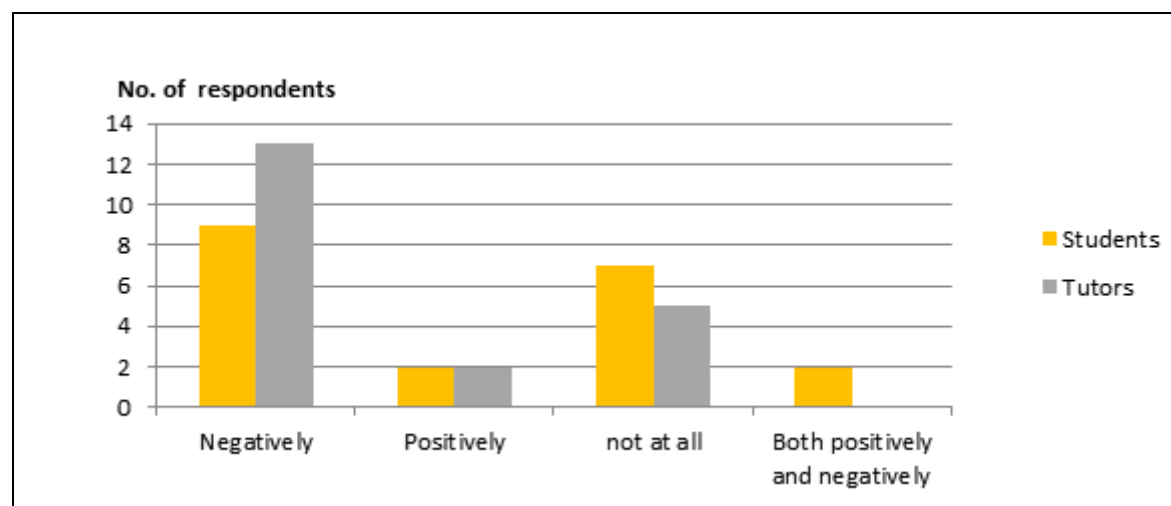
With respect to the SP of the individual and of other learners, there was no discernible difference in themes. Theme 1 suggests that some learners might equate SP with LLP and I could not determine whether or not learners were referring to *any* form of language interaction, i.e. even the most mechanistic language practice, or whether they were thinking of more meaning-focussed interaction which would involve SP in varying degrees. It was not clear, therefore, whether respondents had understood the nuanced differentiation between SP and

language practice that I had given in the introduction to the questionnaire (see Appendix 1). Theme 2 links the importance of SP to affective aspects (feeling comfortable and relaxed), and these aspects are seen as facilitative of LLP.

With respect to TSP, the tutor was seen as a guiding force in fostering SP and LLP (Theme 3). However, the data was ambiguous as there seemed to be some overlap between TSP and TP (e.g. Theme 3, comment 1). Theme 4 refers to the tutor's responsibility for creating a positive climate for the development of LLP and is therefore directly related to TSP

#### 4.1.2 Survey Questions 4.2 and 5.2; RQs 1.2, 1.3

I asked respondents to evaluate the effects on language learning of being able to hear but not see other learners and the tutor. The data collected is shown in Figure 11.



**Figure 11: Evaluation of effects on LLP of being able to hear but not see other learners and tutor**

Whereas most respondents (13/20) felt that not being able to see the tutor had a negative effect on their LLP, this did not equally apply to the lack of visual presence of other learners (9/20). Although some respondents saw no effects of

lack of visual presence of either tutor or other learners, unimportance of lack of visual presence of other learners outweighed that of the tutor (7/20 and 5/20, respectively). A minority (4/20) could see positive effects of not seeing the tutor or other learners and 2/20 could see both positive and negative effects of lack of visual presence of other learners. Themes identified from comments related to this question are shown in Table 11.

Themes	Related comments (examples)
<b>Positive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'I find it a very good skill to develop when you speak to people online as it is like talking on the phone, therefore it does not impact negatively but positively' (other learners)</li> <li>➤ 'Voice only can make one concentrate more on language' (tutor)</li> </ul>
<b>1. A benefit is that you have to concentrate hard on the language (like talking on the phone)</b>	
<b>Negative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'If I could see people, I would at times probably be able to understand better what they are saying because from their facial expressions or gestures I could for instance see how strongly they feel about something, or if they are joking' (other learners)</li> <li>➤ 'You don't get as much feedback from others as you would if you could see them: smiles, nodding, laughs...' (other learners)</li> <li>➤ 'Can be tricky to know her reactions'. (tutor)</li> <li>➤ 'Seeing the tutor's face would also help to strengthen the tutor/student bond' (tutor)</li> </ul>
<b>2. Lack of body language cues impedes SP</b>	
<b>3. It impacts negatively on LLP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'Only from the aspect of leaning a language in that you can't see how the tutor forms their mouth to make the new sounds.' (tutor)</li> <li>➤ 'Not seeing the tutor does sometimes interfere with my understanding of what is being said in the foreign language.' (tutor)</li> </ul>

**Table 11: Evaluation of effects on LLP of lack of visual presence of other learners and the tutor**

A perceived benefit of lack of visual presence of other learners and the tutor is the need to concentrate harder on the sounds of the language (Theme 1). In addition, a negative theme in relation to lack of the tutor's visual presence concerns the associated difficulties for language learning (Theme 3). A further negative theme



relating to both other learners and the tutor concerns the impact of lack of visual presence on social and affective aspects of SP (Theme 2).

This question was problematic in that it did not clearly differentiate between a) the social and affective impact of lack of visual presence on language learning and b) those effects directly linked to learning the language. The data showed respondents' awareness of *both* a) in theme 2 *and* b) in themes1 and 3. However, data from both open and closed questions suggests the overriding importance attributed by respondents to the tutor's visual presence.

#### 4.1.3 Survey questions 4.3 and 5.3; RQs 1.2, 1.3

Figures 12 and 13 show which aspects of the SP of other learners and the tutor the individual learner found either helpful or unhelpful for LLP.

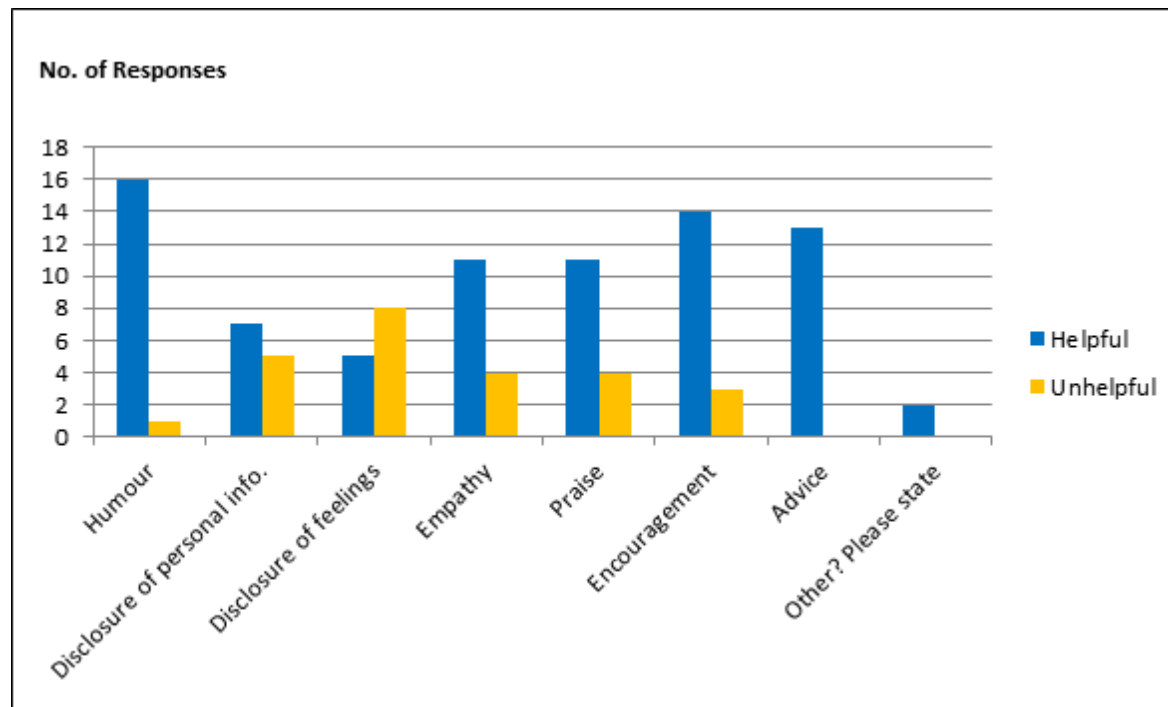
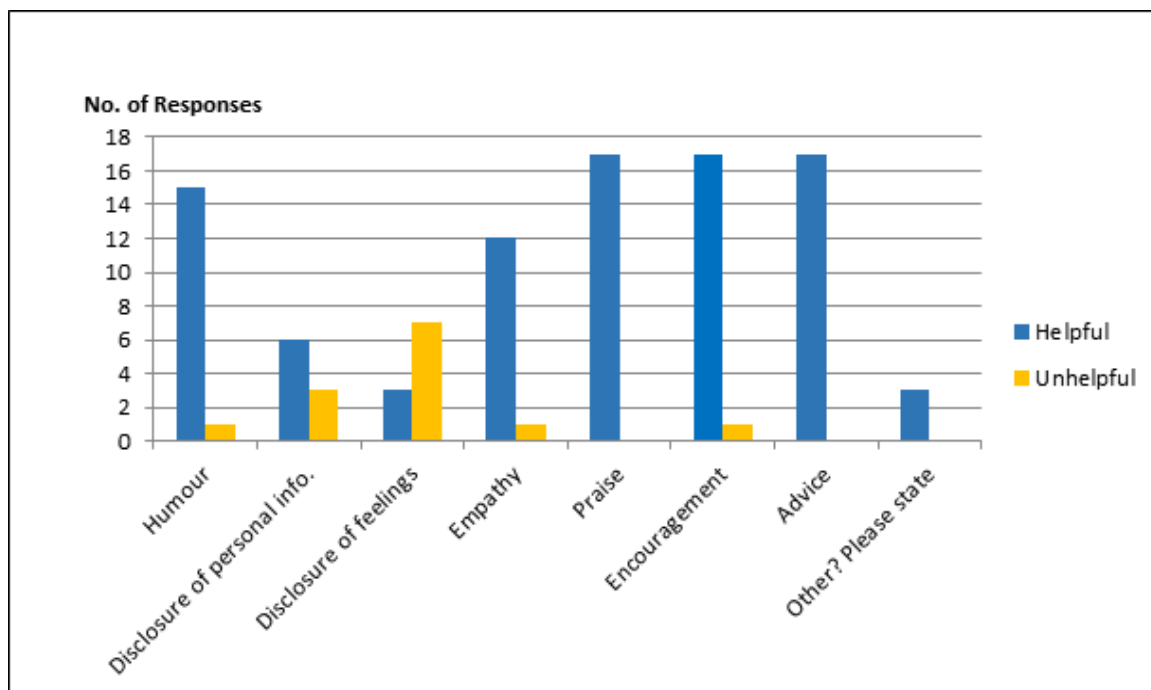


Figure 12: Helpful and unhelpful SP indicators of other learners



**Figure 13: Helpful and unhelpful SP indicators of the tutor**

With respect to both other learners and the tutor, humour is selected as helpful by most respondents (16/20 and 15/20 respectively). However, a greater majority selected praise, encouragement and advice as helpful indicators of the SP of the tutor (17/20). After humour, respondents chose encouragement and advice as helpful from other learners (14/20 and 13/20, respectively). Empathy is similarly rated for both other learners and the tutor (11/20 and 12/20, respectively). Praise from other learners is not as highly valued as praise from the tutor (11/20 as opposed to 17/20). Indicators placed in the 'other' category by respondents were 'time to think' and 'constructive criticism'.

A significant minority of respondents rated self-disclosure of feelings negatively as expressed by the tutor (7/20) and other learners (8/20). Self-disclosure of both personal information and feelings was the least positively valued SP indicator for both other learners and the tutor, although negative evaluation of these aspects was greater for other learners than the tutor (13/20 and 10/20, respectively).

Finally, most indicators were found to be more helpful than unhelpful when projected by both other learners and tutor but fewer respondents rated any of the indicators unhelpful with respect to the tutor.

Comments relating to this data are organised into themes in Tables 12 and 13. Data pertaining to both other learners and tutors is presented together as there was no discernible difference in themes with the exception of theme 10. I indicate following each example quotation, whether the comment referred to the SP indicator of other learners or the tutor.

Helpful indicators		Related comments (examples)
<b>Humour</b>		
<b>Theme 1</b>	Humour creates a relaxed learning environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'Useful. Important to have relaxed atmosphere conducive to learning' (other learners)</li> <li>➤ 'Relaxed atmosphere' (tutor)</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 2</b>	Humour builds group cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'When used well, shows that we are all in the language learning thing together. It's encourages cohesion and solidarity' (other learners)</li> <li>➤ 'Breaks the ice' (tutor)</li> </ul>
<b>Empathy</b>		
<b>Theme 3</b>	Empathy develops feelings of comfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'Useful to make the student feel comfortable' (tutor)</li> <li>➤ 'If I struggle with an activity it's important if other students show empathy' (other learners)</li> </ul>
<b>Praise and encouragement</b>		
<b>Theme 4</b>	Praise and encouragement boost confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'Insecurity of one's ability is always a problem' (tutor)</li> <li>➤ 'It is important to know that someone else thinks you can succeed as I find this quite difficult to find within myself' (tutor)</li> <li>➤ It's great if someone says/indicates you did well here (other learners)</li> </ul>
<b>Advice</b>		
<b>Theme 5</b>	Advice is important for LL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'Absolutely paramount there is so much to learn' (tutor)</li> <li>➤ 'Most valuable of all as its this that helps increase the knowledge' (other learners)</li> </ul>
<b>Self-disclosure (of personal information and feelings)</b>		
<b>Theme 6</b>	It leads to group cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'You can ask them further about things you have in common' (other learners)</li> <li>➤ 'Helps to position people and as well as helping with cohesion' (other learners)</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 7</b>	It develops intimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'It makes distance online learning a more human experience' (other learners)</li> <li>➤ 'It helps you to have a closer relationship with tutor' (tutor)</li> </ul>

**Table 12: Helpful SP indicators of other learners and the tutor**

Unhelpful indicators		Related comments (examples)
<b>Self-disclosure (of personal information and feelings)</b>		
<b>Theme 8</b>	It is not necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'Not essential' (tutor)</li> <li>➤ 'It's not wholly necessary to the learning process for me' (other learners)</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 9</b>	It is not appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'NO!!!!!!</li> <li>It's bad enough having to learn the language without having to worry about dealing with your tutor's baggage' (tutor)</li> <li>➤ 'Yuck, yuck, yuck. Keep it an academic exercise' (other learners)</li> </ul>
<b>Praise, encouragement and advice</b>		
<b>Theme 10</b>	These are inappropriate when not from the tutor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'Patronising + are OK from the tutor, but not from other students. Ugh!' (other learners)</li> <li>➤ 'Patronising' (other learners)</li> </ul>

**Table 13: Unhelpful SP indicators of other learners and the tutor**

Humour is valued for reasons related to the development of a relaxed learning environment and group cohesion (Themes 1 and 2). Empathy is related to feelings of comfort (Theme 3). There was no differentiation in themes for positive comments relating to praise and encouragement and one negative theme was identified, pertaining to the three indicators of praise, encouragement and advice. Praise, encouragement and advice (Themes 4 and 5) are valued for boosting confidence and advice is seen as important for learning. However, all three indicators were deemed to be inappropriate when communicated by other learners and not the tutor (Theme 10).

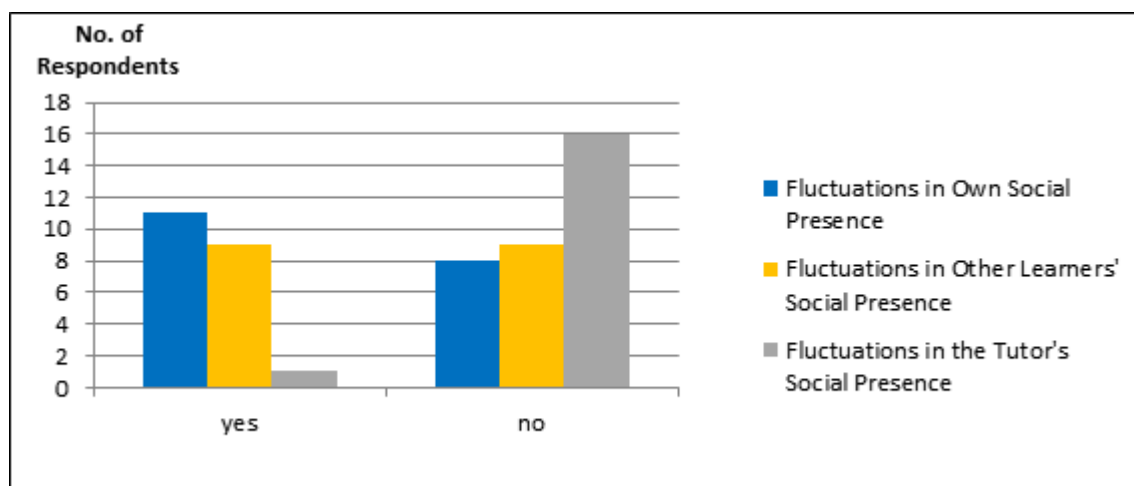
Despite the relatively low number of positive ratings for self-disclosure (Figures 12 and 13), it is linked to the development of group cohesion and intimacy (Themes 6

and 7). When self-disclosure is not viewed as helpful, it is seen as inappropriate and unnecessary in the context of language learning (Themes 8 and 9).

Although the selected SP indicators were found to be more helpful than unhelpful when projected by both other learners and tutor, some SP indicators were regarded as inappropriate and/or unnecessary. The helpfulness of SP indicators was also dependent on who was projecting them as some were regarded as inappropriate when not from the tutor.

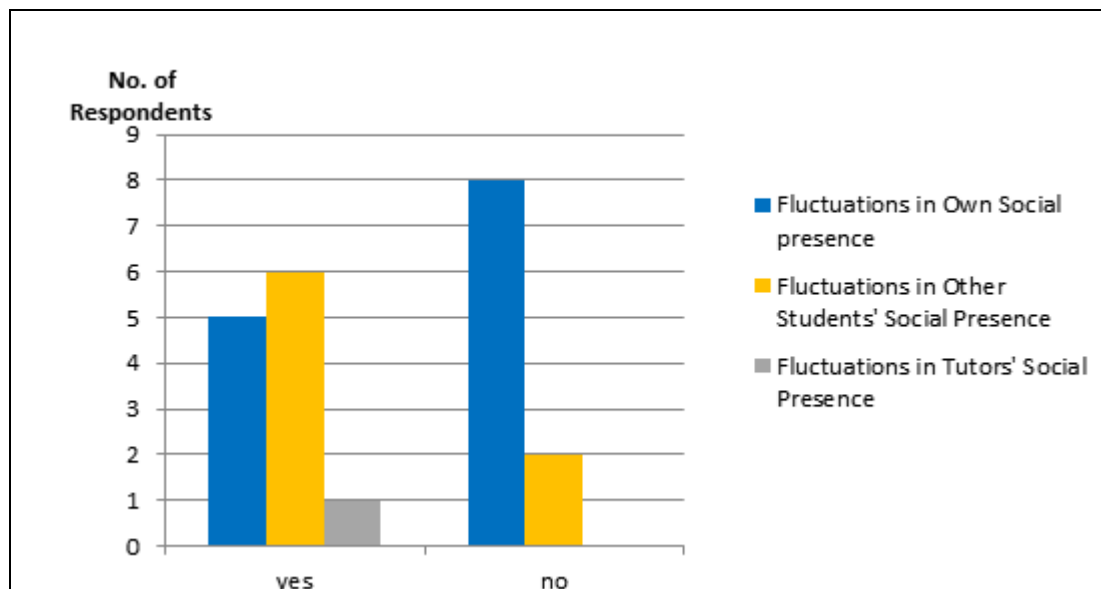
#### **4.1.4 Survey questions 3.7, 3.8, 3.9; 4.6, 4.7, 4.8; 5.6, 5.7, 5.8; RQs 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.3**

I asked learners if they had noticed any fluctuations in their individual SP, that of other learners and of their tutor, either within or across tutorial sessions. Data from these questions is shown in Figure 14.



**Figure 14: Perceptions of fluctuations in SP**

I also asked learners if they perceived any effects of these fluctuations on language learning. Data is presented in Figure 15.



**Figure 15: Perceptions of the effects of fluctuations in SP on language learning**

Around half had noticed some fluctuations in their own SP (11/19) and that of other learners (9/18). 5/13 recognised some impact on their LLP of fluctuations in their own SP, with 6/8 seeing the impact of fluctuations in SP of other learners. Only one student perceived any fluctuation in TSP, and recognised the impact of this on LLP. This may suggest a potential bias in favour of the tutor if respondents perceived 'fluctuations' to be a negative factor.

The response rate for data presented in Figure 15 was lower than that of Figure 14. In retrospect, I realised that questions relating to effects of fluctuations in SP on LLP were complex and perhaps best explored through interviews. Nevertheless, I asked respondents to give examples of what might impact on fluctuations in SP of self, other learners and the tutor. Themes derived from responses to these questions are presented in Table 14.

<b>Fluctuations in individual SP are due to:</b>	
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Related comments (examples)</b>
<b>1. Anxiety and lack of confidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'Lack of confidence &amp; worry about not understanding'</li> <li>➤ 'Fear of looking daft'</li> </ul>
<b>2. SP of others affects the SP of the individual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'My comfort level is quite dependant on the group composition and how the tutor reacts to individuals; this varies from one tutorial to another'</li> <li>➤ 'It's great when there is a good rapport amongst the group'</li> </ul>
<b>3. Nature of tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'Some topics are more interesting than others so I participate more when it's interesting'</li> <li>➤ 'When we are debating or discussing a topic, a lot more of my real opinions, values, etc. come through'</li> </ul>
<b>Fluctuations in SP of other students are due to:</b>	
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Related comments (examples)</b>
<b>4. Anxiety and lack of confidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'The less fluent they are the less they wish to interact and this gets worse if they are amongst others with far greater fluency'</li> <li>➤ 'Some students go "quiet" on both text and audio if they feel unsure of themselves'</li> </ul>
<b>5. Individual circumstances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'On occasions there are children or animals making noise in the background'</li> <li>➤ 'Occasionally if they arrive late or leave early and seem to have some personal preoccupation'</li> </ul>

**Table 14: Reasons for fluctuations in SP**

With respect to the themes, affective responses, i.e. anxiety and confidence were associated with perceptions of fluctuations in both individual SP and that of other learners (Themes 1 and 4). An additional theme relating to fluctuations in the SP of other learners was the impact of individual circumstances (Theme 5). With respect to fluctuations in individual SP, identified themes also pertained to group dynamics (including the tutor's role in this) and to the nature of tasks (Themes 2 and 3, respectively). There were no comments relating to factors impacting on fluctuations in TSP, which is consistent with data presented in Figures 14 and 15.



## 4.2 Research Question 2

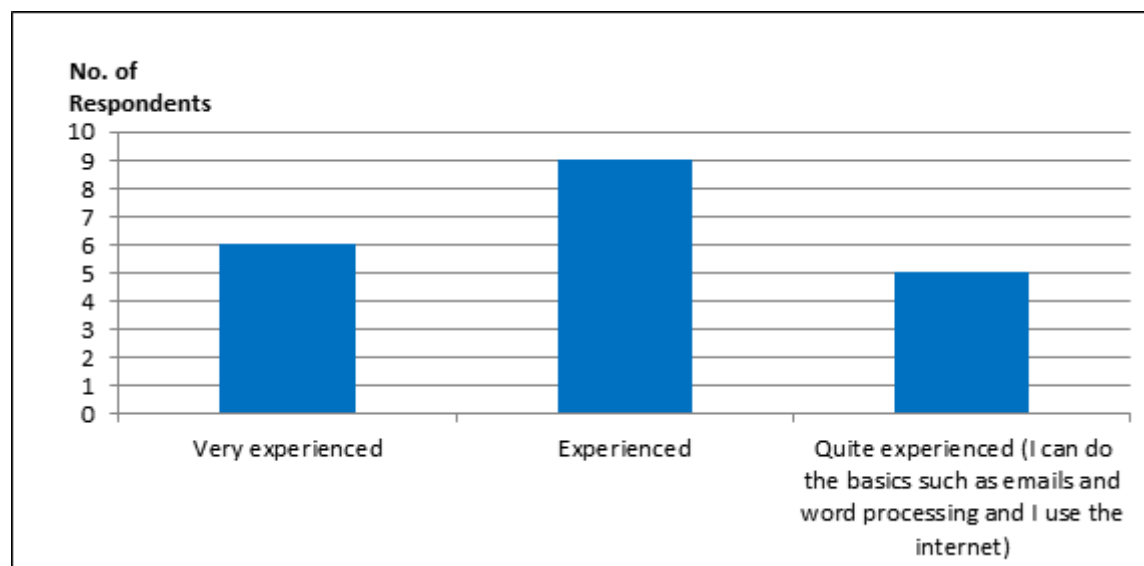
RQ2 and its sub-questions are mapped to the SQs in Table 15, below. Data relevant to this RQ is presented in sub-sections 4.2.1- 4.2.5.

<b>RQ2. According to the perceptions of learners, what factors influence the projection of SP in online language tutorials?</b>	<b>Survey questions</b>
<b>Q2.1</b> How and to what extent might these factors be related to individual responses to and in the online environment?	2.1, 2.2, 2.3 2.4, 3.6
<b>Q2.2</b> How and to what extent might these factors be related to the uses of the tools of the online environment?	3.2, 3.3, 3.4 3.6, 4.4, 4.5 5.4, 5.5
<b>Q2.3</b> How and to what extent might these factors be related to other aspects of the online environment?	3.6

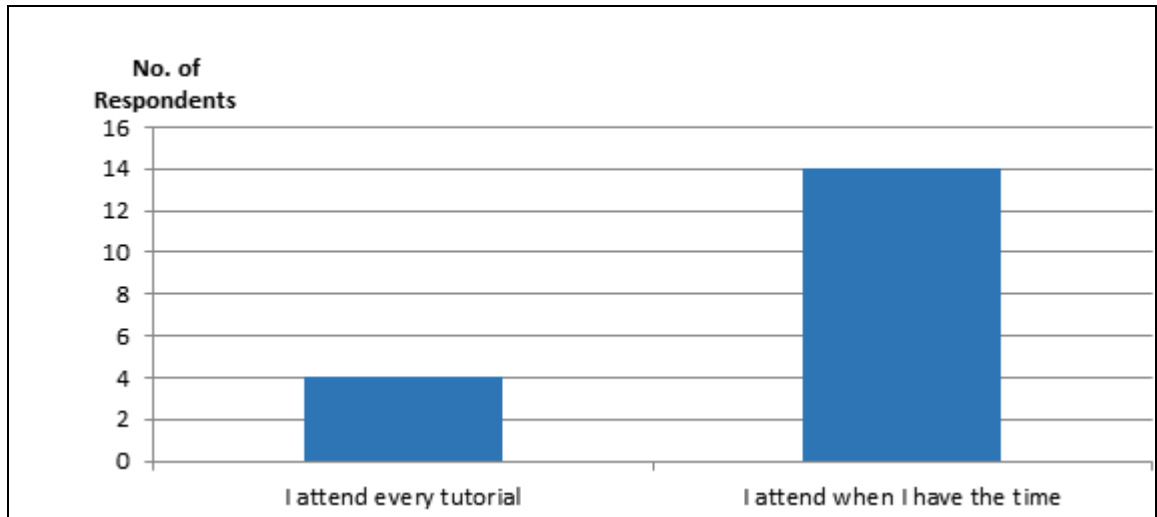
**Table 15: RQ 2 mapped to survey questions**

### 4.2.1 Survey questions 2.1, 2.3, 2.4; RQ 2.1

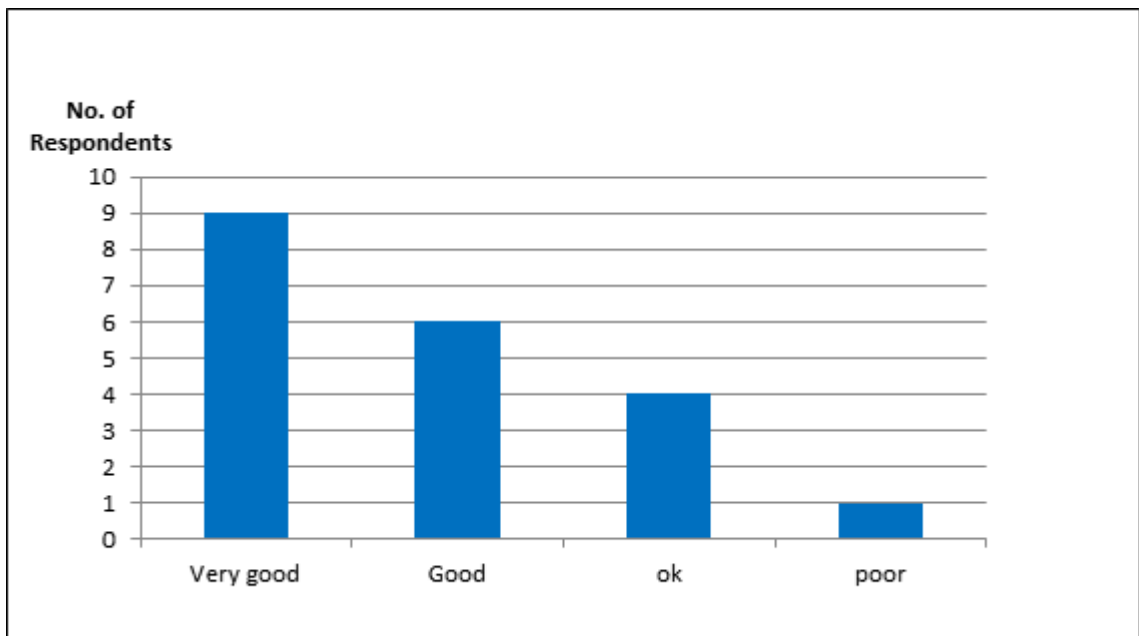
Figures 16-18 show respondents' experience of technology, attendance of online tutorials and rating of tutorials for language learning.



**Figure 16: Experience of technology**



**Figure 17: Online tutorial attendance**



**Figure 18: Students' ratings of online tutorials**

Most respondents were experienced in the use of technology (15/20) and most attended online tutorials when they had the time (14/20). Online tutorials were evaluated positively by 15/20 respondents with 4/20 rating them as 'ok'. The themes in Table 16 were identified from comments relating to ratings of online tutorials.

Positive aspects	Related Comments (examples)
<b>Theme 1</b> It develops confidence in speaking the language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'It helps to build confidence to speak'</li> <li>➤ 'I do like the idea of Elluminate as there is a chance to talk and practise speaking as well as build up the confidence how to talk and think in the language we study'</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 2</b> It has practical advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'Convenient'</li> <li>➤ 'With it being on line it make it much easier and less expensive to be able to attend'</li> <li>➤ 'The facility to rerun using the recorded tutorials very useful too'</li> </ul>
Drawbacks	Related Comments
<b>Theme 3</b> Technology problems and limitations impede communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'Sometimes the technology doesn't work the way you want and there is also background noise, echo and delay when speaking'</li> <li>➤ 'Very limited environment for learning – interaction not spontaneous'</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 4.</b> It lacks visual cues and this is a problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'It cannot replace face to face tutorials'</li> <li>➤ 'Lack of body language is off-putting'</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 5</b> The quality of the tutorial depends on the skill of the tutor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'It also depends on the ability of the tutor to allow everyone to participate and avoid some students monopolizing the discussions'</li> <li>➤ 'I have found it very much depends on the experience of the moderator, what level of skills they have in using the software, individuals personality / comfort in using said software and organisational / preparatory skills'</li> </ul>

**Table 16: Evaluation of online tutorials**

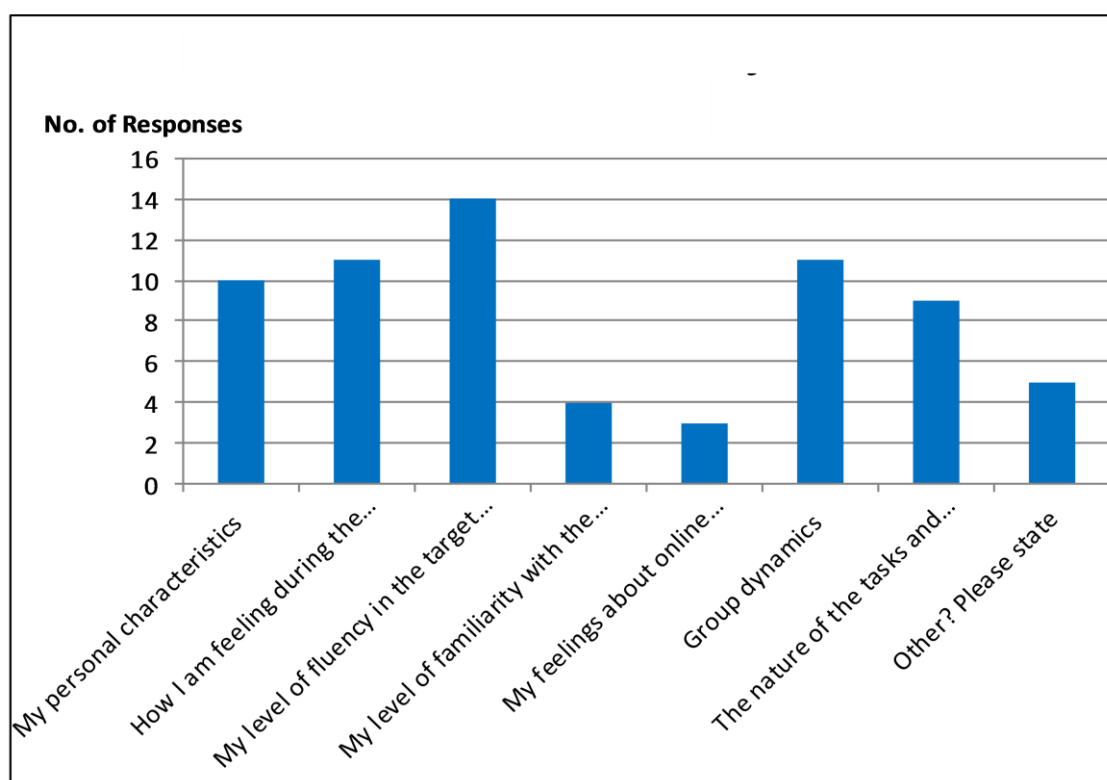
Positive themes relate to building confidence for speaking (Theme 1) and the convenience of working in *ElluminateLive* (Theme 2). Less positive themes highlight the limitations of technology (Theme 3), the negative impact of lack of visual cues (Theme 4) and the importance of the skill of the tutor in managing technology and online interaction (Theme 5).

SQs 2.1, 2.3, 2.4 aimed to collect background data of potential significance to responses to questions in sections 3, 4 and 5 of the survey, which were specifically related to the communication of SP. For example, if respondents were inexperienced in the use of technology, rarely attended tutorials or rated

*ElluminateLive* as poor as a medium for learning languages, such data may well have explained negative attitudes to the communication of online SP. On the contrary, the data elicited from closed questions revealed positive attitudes to *ElluminateLive* from respondents who were mostly experienced in the use of technology and who attended tutorials, when possible; the latter, being typical in a context where language tutorials are not obligatory. On the other hand, all themes identified from comments relating to drawbacks of *ElluminateLive* (Table 16), were from respondents who rated it as ‘good’. This may therefore suggest ambivalence in relation to their evaluation of the medium or to learning languages online.

#### 4.2.2 Survey question 3.6; RQs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3

Figure 19 shows respondent perceptions of factors influencing the projection of their individual SP.



**Figure 19: Factors influencing the projection of the SP of the individual**

The most highly-rated factor was level of fluency in the TL (14/20). Individual differences (personal characteristics and feelings during the tutorial) also impact on SP for the individual, along with group dynamics (10/20, 11/20 and 11/20, respectively). 9/20 perceived the impact of tasks and activities on the projection of their SP. Only 4/20 selected 'my level of familiarity with the tools of the environment'. A smaller minority (3/20) selected 'my feelings about online learning'. Finally, factors in the 'other' category (5/20) were covered in the named factors, i.e. the nature of activities and feelings during tutorials. Themes, shown in Table 17 were identified from comments.

<b>Factor 1: Personal characteristics</b>		
<b>Theme 1</b>	<b>Personal drive to communicate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'I will speak whether or not my oral expression is perfect or not as unless you are given the opportunity you are reducing your opportunity to progress'</li> <li>➤ 'This did affect me when I first started, but my drive to learn the language was stronger so I realised I just had to get over it'</li> <li>➤ 'I'm keen to communicate no matter how badly</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 2</b>	<b>Confidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'I participate well when I'm sure of the vocab and structures for a theme but not much if I'm unsure of them'</li> <li>➤ 'Yes, where there is a group of mixed ability, the fluent speaker can be a real deterrent'</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 3</b>	<b>Shyness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'I'm very shy, it takes a while to find the confidence to participate'</li> <li>➤ 'I'm normally quite shy'</li> </ul>
<b>Factor 2: How I'm feeling during the tutorial</b>		
<b>Theme 4</b>	<b>Tiredness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'If I had a long day, I won't be active'</li> <li>➤ 'Sometimes I feel tired and can't be bothered'</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 5</b>	<b>Anxiety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'If other people dominate or the tutor is not terribly sensitive and picks me out, I feel worse and don't want to do anything beyond what I have to do'</li> <li>➤ 'I often feel pressurised even though the tutor isn't pressurising me at all- it is just what I perceive- I don't like being put on the spot although I know I have done it to myself!!'</li> </ul>
<b>Factor 3: Group dynamics</b>		
<b>Theme 6</b>	<b>SP of others affects SP of the individual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'This would make a difference and I suspect if the dynamic was not conducive to my own view of social interaction (for example, the online presence of the other students is very quiet'</li> <li>➤ 'I do need personalities to bounce off'</li> </ul>
<b>Factor 4: The nature of the tasks and activities</b>		
<b>Theme 7</b>	<b>Attitudes towards tasks/activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'I don't like it if too many personal questions are asked'</li> <li>➤ 'If I feel I am struggling, that does not make for a good time'</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 8</b>	<b>Some tasks and activities are inherently more conducive to SP than others</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'Some tasks fire the imagination, others don't'</li> <li>➤ 'Some tasks are geared at specific responses and there's no time to 'chat' around them or show your own views and therefore your identity position in relation to these. On the other hand, some tasks require you to present arguments and give opinions and are very good at allowing speakers to show who they are'</li> </ul>

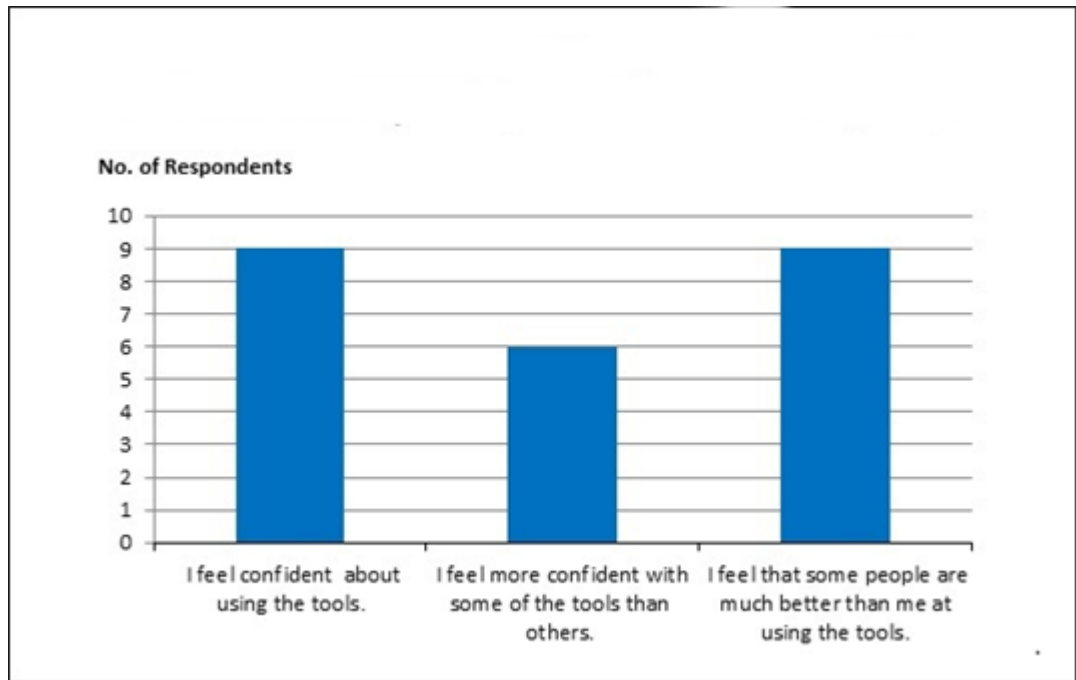
**Table 17: Factors influencing the projection of the SP of the individual (explanatory comments)**

Although level of fluency was the highest rated factor influencing the projection of individual SP, comments linked to this factor related to personal characteristics, i.e. a drive to communicate and confidence (Themes 1 and 2). Being shy also influenced the projection of SP (Theme 3). Themes related to feelings during tutorials were tiredness and anxiety (Themes 4 and 5). Group dynamics were deemed to be important in relation to the impact on the individual of the SP of others (Theme 6). Finally, SP is both influenced by respondent attitudes to tasks and activities (Theme 7), and by the inherent nature of tasks and activities, which may not foster high degrees of SP (Theme 8). No themes were identified relating to the other named factors.

Clearly, apart from group dynamics and the nature of tasks and activities, the most important factors influencing SP relate to personal characteristics and feelings during tutorials. However, the latter factors may also be interdependent, as demonstrated by theme 2, as confidence is impacted upon by interaction during tutorials. In addition, there was also some conflation in the data between SP and LLP, given that respondents referred to feelings which impacted on the projection of their LLP rather than their SP.

#### **4.2.3 Survey questions 3.2; RQ 2.2**

I asked respondents to rate their confidence in using the online tools to participate socially in the group. The findings are presented in Figure 20.



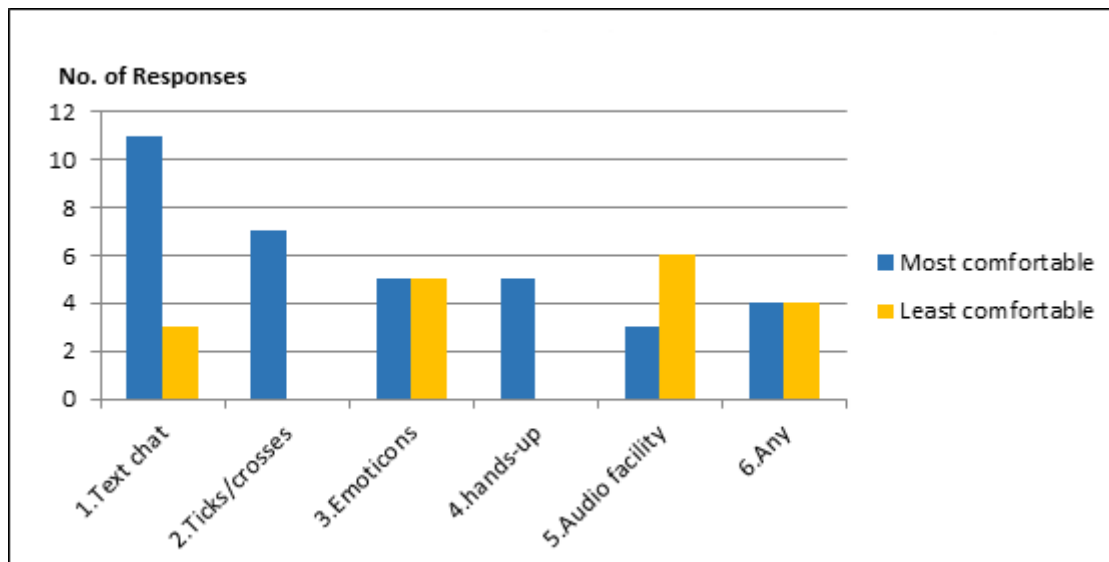
**Figure 20: Respondent ratings of confidence in using online tools**

Whereas 9/18 respondents felt confident using the tools of the environment, an equivalent number lacked confidence in their use. 6/9 respondents also felt more confident using some tools than others. The data suggests, therefore, that lack of confidence may be an issue with respect to the use of tools to project SP.

#### **4.2.4 Survey questions 3.3, 3.4; RQ 2.2**

I asked respondents to select the online tools they were most/least comfortable using for the projection of their individual SP. The results are presented in Figure 21.





**Figure 21: Participant preferences in use of tools for the projection of SP**

The text chat emerges as the most comfortable tool (11/20) although 3/20 respondents were uncomfortable using it. Ticks and crosses are the next favourite tool (7/20). 5/20 respondents selected emoticons as their most comfortable tool, whereas an equivalent number felt uncomfortable using them. Although 5/20 respondents selected the hands-up tool as 'most comfortable', the audio facility was perceived by the highest number of respondents (6/20) to be the least comfortable tool. 4/20 respondents did not mind which tool they used but an equal number also indicated that they did not feel comfortable using any tool. There was a relatively low number of responses for all tools in both the most and least comfortable categories compared with other questions. The themes shown in Tables 18 and 19 relate to explanatory comments identified from the data.

Themes	Related comments (examples)
1. The text chat is useful to make contributions to the interaction when others are speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'The chat box is especially useful to add in comments when someone else is talking as a reminder or verification'</li> <li>➤ 'Text chat can be used while others are speaking to show you are listening, approving etc'</li> </ul>
2. Emoticons are useful for showing feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'Emoticons: because I like to show how I feel'</li> <li>➤ 'Emoticons because they can be thrown in quickly to show that you are listening, approving'</li> </ul>

**Table 18: Positive themes related to the use of tools**

Theme	Related comments (examples)
3. Emoticons are limited in what they can communicate and ambiguous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'Emoticons can be irritating and tend to encourage polarised reactions. Little room for nuances'</li> <li>➤ 'Emoticons. I'm sure they can be misinterpreted'</li> </ul>
4. The text chat disrupts the session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'It is like passing notes in class. I think it is rude'</li> <li>➤ 'Text chat can detract from the main action'</li> </ul>
5. Lack of confidence affects the use of the audio facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'Audio, because I was always a bit behind in my studies, but still found the tutorial helpful'</li> <li>➤ 'Audio because it's much more of an event on line'</li> </ul>
6. Technical problems adversely affect use of audio facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'Audio facility in general as there are always some sort of technical problems'</li> <li>➤ 'Audio-facility is fine without the echo!'</li> </ul>

**Table 19: Negative themes related to the use of tools**

Whereas the text chat is valued for its facility to contribute to interaction whilst others are speaking (Theme 1), it is also regarded as disruptive (Theme 4). Likewise, emoticons are both positively valued for showing feelings (Theme 2) and negatively valued because they are open to misinterpretation and limited

(Theme 3). Some respondents lacked confidence when using the audio facility (Theme 5), and uncomfortable in its use because of technical problems (Theme 6).

#### **4.2.5 Survey Questions 4.4, 4.5; 5.4, 5.5; RQs 1.2, 1.3, 2.2**

Finally, I asked respondents to think about how SP was projected through the use of online tools by other learners and the tutor and how this was helpful/unhelpful to the individual learner for language learning. The data for this question is also relevant to RQs 1.2 and 1.3. As for Section 4.1.3, there was no discernible difference in themes identified for both other learners and the tutor and so themes are presented together in Table 20.

Helpful aspects of the use of tools by other learners and the tutor	
Themes	Related comments (examples)
1. Use of text chat to support learning without interrupting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'Text chat helps with making comments without interrupting which is difficult online' (other learners)</li> <li>➤ 'If for example when either you or another learner forgets a word and someone else knows it they use the chat box to post the word or phrase, which then allows the speaker to see the word without interrupting their flow as such' (other learners)</li> </ul>
2. Use of text chat and audio to acknowledge the presence of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'It feels personal and demonstrates their awareness of me as a person and not just a name on the participant list' (TC, other learners)</li> <li>➤ 'Welcoming via audio introduction – what they are doing, what students have been doing etc' (audio, tutors)</li> </ul>
3. Emoticons, ticks and clapping icon for positive reinforcement and encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'When people add emoticons or ticks you know they agree with you. Positive reinforcement' (other learners)</li> <li>➤ 'Use of emoticons etc are often encouraging and can be humorous' (tutor and other learners)</li> <li>➤ 'The clapping icon to encourage' (tutor)</li> </ul>
4. Emoticons to show humour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'I can't think of any other than using emoticons to show laughter' (other learners)</li> <li>➤ 'Use of emoticons etc are often encouraging and can be humorous' (tutor)</li> </ul>
Unhelpful aspects of the use of tools by other learners and the tutor	
5. The text chat can be distracting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 'Using the text chat to talk to other students if this comes up for all to see' (other learners)</li> <li>➤ 'if students write irrelevant stuff in the text chat if someone is talking; I find this distracting' (other learners)</li> <li>➤ 'Chat - I don't check what people write in the chat - I lose focus' (tutor)</li> </ul>

**Table 20: Helpful/unhelpful aspects of the use of the tools by other learners and the tutor when learning the language**

The text chat is regarded as a helpful tool to support LLP without interrupting (Theme 1). An additional theme was the use of both text chat and audio facility to acknowledge the presence of others (Theme 2). Other tools (emoticons, ticks and crosses and the clapping icon) were valued positively by respondents when used by other learners and the tutor to encourage and to provide positive reinforcement

(Theme 3). A theme, directly related to the use of emoticons, was their capacity for showing humour (Theme 4). With respect to unhelpful aspects of the use of tools by other learners and the tutor, the text chat was perceived to have the potential to be distracting (Theme 5).

Although this question linked the use of tools to SP and the effects of their social use on LLP, some respondents related text chat use directly to LLP (Theme 1), thus by-passing the relevance of SP. Also, it is worth noting that there were fewer comments relating to unhelpful aspects of the tutor's use of tool than there were for other learners (four as opposed to eight, in total). This may indicate an unwillingness to criticise the tutor or an awareness of the importance of the tutor's management of the online environment for LLP, i.e. teaching presence.

When compared to 4.2.4, data from this section suggests that there is a difference in how learners may perceive the use of tools depending on who is using them. Although themes relating to text chat use are similar for survey questions reported in both sections, negative themes about emoticons and the audio facility were identified when respondents were asked to evaluate these for the projection of their individual SP. No such negative themes were evidenced in data relating to the use of these tools by other learners or the tutor.

## **4.3 Summary**

In this section, overarching and sub-themes derived from open SQs are mapped to RQs and to the relevant sections of the survey. Patterns derived from analysis of closed questions are also presented here and linked to the overarching and sub-themes, which they support. The data is presented in Table 21.

<b>Overarching themes (O/a t), Sub-themes (S-T) and Patterns (P)</b>		<b>RQs</b>	<b>Section</b>
<b>O/a t 1.</b>	<b>The overriding importance of TSP for both SP and LLP</b>	1.3	4.1.1
S-T	The tutor leads the way for SP and LLP	1.3	4.1.1
S-T	Creating a positive atmosphere helps learning	1.3	4.1.1
S-T	Lack of visual presence of the tutor has a greater negative impact than that of other learners on LLP	1.2, 1.3	4.1.2
P	TSP is more important than individual SP or that of other learners for the learner	1.3	4.1.1
P	Fewer respondents rated any of the SP indicators as unhelpful with respect to the tutor	1.3	4.1.3
<b>O/a t 2.</b>	<b>The importance of SP of other learners and the individual learner for LLP</b>	1.1, 1.2	4.1.1
S-T	Feeling relaxed and comfortable helps language learning	1.2	4.1.1
S-T	The importance of SP for speaking and participating	1.1, 1.2	4.1.1
S-T	Hearing but not seeing other learners impedes SP and LLP for some learners	1.2	4.1.2
P	Most respondents rate SP as important for language learning	1.1, 1.2	4.1.1
<b>O/a t 3.</b>	<b>SP indicators of other learners and the tutor are mostly helpful but sometimes unhelpful</b>	1.2, 1.3	4.1.3
S-T	Humour creates a relaxed learning environment and builds group cohesion	1.2, 1.3	4.1.3
P	Humour is the most highly rated SP indicator of other learners, followed by encouragement and advice	1.2	4.1.3
S-T	Empathy develops feelings of comfort	1.2, 1.3	4.1.3
P	Over half of respondents value empathy from other learners and the tutor	1.2, 1.3	4.1.3
S-T	Although praise and encouragement boost confidence and advice is important for language learning, these indicators are inappropriate when not from the tutor for some learners	1.2, 1.3	4.1.3
P	Praise, encouragement and advice are the most highly rated SP indicators of the tutor but are less highly valued for other learners	1.2, 1.3	4.1.3
S-T	Self-disclosure leads to group cohesion and develops intimacy but can be perceived as unnecessary and inappropriate	1.2 1.3	4.1.3
P	Self-disclosure of both personal information and feelings was the least positively valued SP indicator for both other learners and the tutor	1.2 1.3	4.1.3
<b>O/a t 4.</b>	<b>The impact of individual feelings and differences on the projection of individual SP and that of other learners</b>	2.1	4.2.2 4.1.4
S-T	Personal drive to communicate and confidence influence SP	2.1	4.2.2
S-T	Anxiety, lack of confidence and shyness influence SP	2.1	4.2.2 4.1.4
S-T	Tiredness influences SP during the tutorial	2.1	4.2.2
S-T	Individual circumstances influence SP	2.1	4.1.4
P	For a majority of respondents individual differences and feelings influence their individual SP	2.1	4.2.2
P	Learners recognise fluctuations in their own SP and that of other learners but most learners do not recognise any fluctuations in the tutor's SP	2.1	4.1.4

<b>O/a t 5.</b>	<b>The impact of group dynamics on the projection of individual SP</b>	2.3	4.2.2 4.1.4
S-T	SP of others affects the SP of the individual	2.3	4.2.2 4.1.4
P	Approximately half of respondents recognised that group dynamics impacted on the projection of their individual SP	2.3	4.2.2
P	Learners recognise fluctuations in their individual SP	2.3	4.1.4
<b>O/a t 6.</b>	<b>The impact of tasks and activities on the projection of individual SP</b>	2.3	4.2.2 4.1.4
S-T	Both the nature of tasks and activities and individual responses to these affect SP	2.3	4.2.2 4.1.4
P	Approximately half of respondents recognised that tasks and activities impacted on the projection of their individual SP	2.3	4.2.2
P	Learners recognise fluctuations in their individual SP	2.3	4.2.2 4.1.4
<b>O/a t 7.</b>	<b>Online tools are more or less comfortable for the projection of individual SP</b>	2.2	4.2.3 4.2.4
S-T	The text chat is perceived by some learners as useful whilst others are talking. However, it is also regarded as disruptive by other learners	2.2	4.2.4
P	Overall, the text chat is the most comfortable tool to use, followed by ticks and crosses.	2.2	4.2.4
S-T	Some learners value emoticons for showing feelings but others regard them as ambiguous and limited	2.2	4.2.4
P	An equal number of respondents selected emoticons as the most and least comfortable tool	2.2	4.2.4
S-T	Some respondents regard the audio facility negatively due to technical problems	2.2	4.2.4
P	The audio tool is the least comfortable tool to use	2.2	4.2.4
P	Lack of confidence may be an issue with respect to the use of tools for SP.	2.2	4.2.3
<b>O/a t 8.</b>	<b>Online tools are mostly facilitative when used by other learners and the tutor to project SP</b>	1.2,1.3, 2.2	4.2.5
S-T	Use of the text chat is helpful to support language learning without interrupting but it can be distracting when used by other learners	1.2,1.3, 2.2	4.2.5
S-T	Use of text chat and audio are helpful to acknowledge the presence of others	1.2,1.3 2.2	4.2.5
S-T	Emoticons, ticks and clapping icon are helpful for positive reinforcement and encouragement	1.2 1.3 2.2	4.2.5
S-T	Emoticons are helpful to show humour	1.2,1.3 2.2	4.2.5
P	Fewer uses of tools are unhelpful for the tutor's SP than that of other learners	1.3, 2.2	4.2.5

**Table 21: Overarching themes, sub-themes and patterns from the survey data**

Data pertaining to RQ1 in this chapter indicated the overriding importance of TSP for LLP (Overarching theme 1). Although of lesser importance to respondents than TSP, individual SP and that of other learners is denoted as an overarching theme



as its impact on LLP is also demonstrated throughout this chapter (e.g. 4.1.1; 4.1.3). With the exception of data relating to tool use (emoticons, audio facility, for example), there seemed to be a conflation between thematic content relating to the importance of individual SP and that of other learners for LLP. (RQs 1.1 and 1.2).

Overarching theme 3 reflects the content of its sub-themes and patterns, identified from the data about specific SP indicators. Not all indicators were perceived as helpful, and some were perceived as inappropriate when not projected by the tutor. With respect to Overarching theme 4, pertaining to RQ 2, the impact of individual feelings and differences on the projection of SP was identified not only in section 4.2.2 but also throughout this chapter. On the other hand, there was less evidence to support the designation of Overarching themes 5 and 6 as 'overarching' (RQ 2). However, my decision to include them was based on thematic content (see Tables 14 and 17) and also because of their potential relevance to my RQs as justified in Chapter 3, section 3.6.1.

Overarching themes 7 and 8 (RQs 1 and 2) reflect respondent perspectives about the use of online tools for the projection of SP. Although there is considerable overlap in the content of sub-themes presented under each overarching theme, there are some variations, i.e. different attitudes to the use of emoticons and audio facility for the projection of individual SP as opposed to that of the tutor and other learners. For this reason, sub-themes relating to tool use were grouped beneath two overarching themes.

Finally, there was a conflation between SP and LLP in some themes identified from the testimonies of respondents (e.g. Theme 1, section 4.1.1; Themes 1 and



2, section 4.2.2; Theme 1, section 4.2.5). I decided to include this data in my analysis because my guiding principal was to collect all data which may later prove to be significant. The questionnaire data represented the first step in the process of data gathering of learner perceptions, to be triangulated through follow-up interviews. The overarching themes, sub-themes and patterns presented in this chapter therefore need to be regarded as preliminary.

# Chapter 5: Interview findings

## Introduction

In this chapter, I present and discuss the overarching themes and sub-themes derived from nine student interviews, supported by quotations from participants. These quotations are illustrative and do not represent the totality of quotations from all interviews, which provided evidence for any given theme. Each interview participant is given a letter from a-j in order to distinguish between them (i is not used). The data presented in Chapter 5 is related to the wider literature in Chapter 7.

The interviews were semi-structured in that responses to survey questions were used as a springboard for discussion. The aim was to further explore the findings from the surveys and to reframe or extend them as I moved towards the development of a final thematic map of learner perceptions of SP. Therefore, the findings of this chapter necessarily reflect those of Chapter 4, but are not identical to them. The following six overarching themes were derived from the interview data:

- 1) The importance of SP for LLP.
- 2) The overriding importance of TSP and TP.
- 3) Helpful and unhelpful SP.
- 4) The impact of individual differences.
- 5) The dynamic, varying nature of SP.
- 6) The impact of *IlluminateLive*.

In sections 5.1-5.6 of this chapter I present and discuss thematic maps (related to my RQs) for each overarching theme and its sub-themes. In Section 5.7, I present

a summary map of all sub-themes and overarching themes, derived from the interview data. Finally, where my findings are related to specific Col presences, I discuss TP, LLP and SP. I also refer to TSP (teacher social presence) and LSP (learner social presence) when it is necessary to differentiate between them.

## 5.1 Overarching theme 1: The importance of SP for LLP (RQs 1.1, 1.2, 1.3)

SP was regarded as important for interview participants. It was considered to both facilitate language learning, and also to be intrinsically connected with it. The overarching theme: *The importance of SP for LLP* is presented in Figure 22 in relation to its two sub-themes: *Facilitation and feeling comfortable*, and *SP as intrinsic to LLP*.

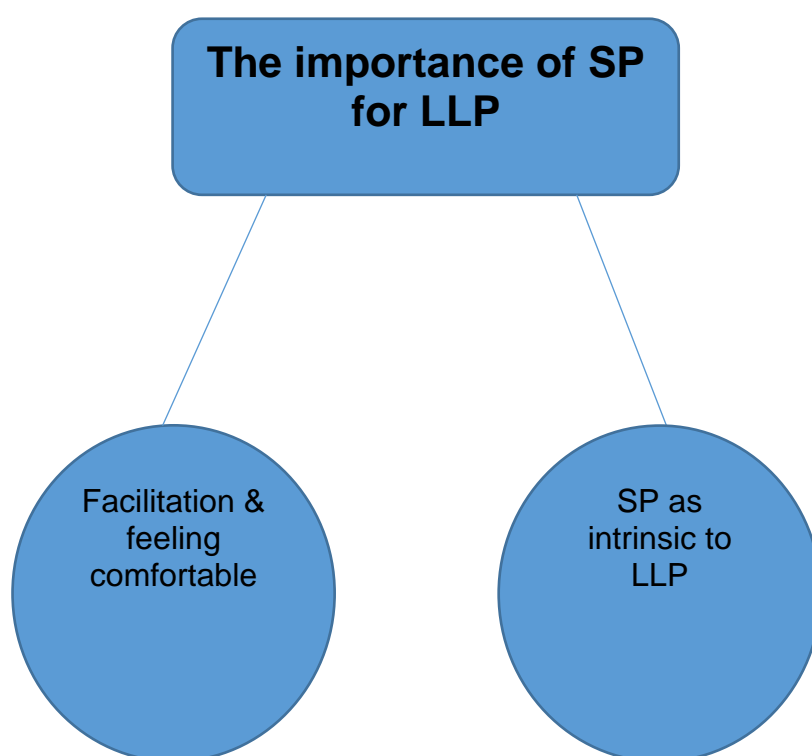


Figure 22: The importance of SP for LLP

### **Sub-theme 5.1.1 Facilitation and feeling comfortable**

Participants regarded SP as facilitative of language learning in its effects on individual learners and the findings reinforced the questionnaire results in this aspect. J said:

*'It's the mere fact that it just makes it more fun and makes it less of a problem, the fact that you cannot recall the words. The fact that it won't come seems to be less of a problem when the atmosphere is kept more comfortable than it does when, when, it doesn't feel so comfortable, kind of thing. It makes you more relaxed or less tense and that, and that, definitely helps'.*

As for the questionnaire data, the importance of the facilitative aspects of SP was related to the creation of a comfortable online learning environment and the alleviation of anxiety. This notion was repeated across the interviews. Expanding on the questionnaire findings, feeling comfortable was also perceived as a condition for open communication amongst learners. As H stated: *'You can actually have really good discussions once you feel more comfortable'*. E related feeling comfortable to progress in language learning: *'I think it makes people feel comfortable and you make more progress linguistically when you feel comfortable'*.

In addition, feeling comfortable was associated with the difficulties of learning languages and also learning languages online. For example, C was aware of language inhibitions and felt that this aspect *'is something that very much, that needs to be in the mind of, of a service provider in the UK'*. Allied to this, there was a general perception across all interviews of the difficulties of online learning and this is summarised by C: *'You're struggling enough with the subject itself without having to try and do a computer course to figure that lot out too, kind of thing'*.

It was also acknowledged that the tutor needed to feel comfortable as both LSP and LLP depended on this. The tutor's feeling of comfort was related to *'experience and the amount of time they have using those tools'* (K), and the challenge for tutors of managing technology, as well as learning content, was perceived as an added difficulty in creating a positive online learning environment for participants D, E, H and K.

### **Sub-theme 5.1.2 SP as intrinsic to LLP**

Allied to the notion of facilitation and feeling comfortable, there was a consensus relating to an intrinsic connection between SP and language learning when participants discussed their individual SP and the participation of other learners. SP was facilitative because participants had to speak in the online environment, owing to the nature of language learning. However, participants also acknowledged the difference between language learning and learning a content-orientated subject such as *'Geography'* (K). This difference was perceived to lie in the fact that language learning was contingent on some projection of SP and, particularly, in the context of *ElluminateLive* tutorials which aimed to foster participation. SP was, therefore, not only facilitative but also essentially linked to, and part of, communication in the target language.

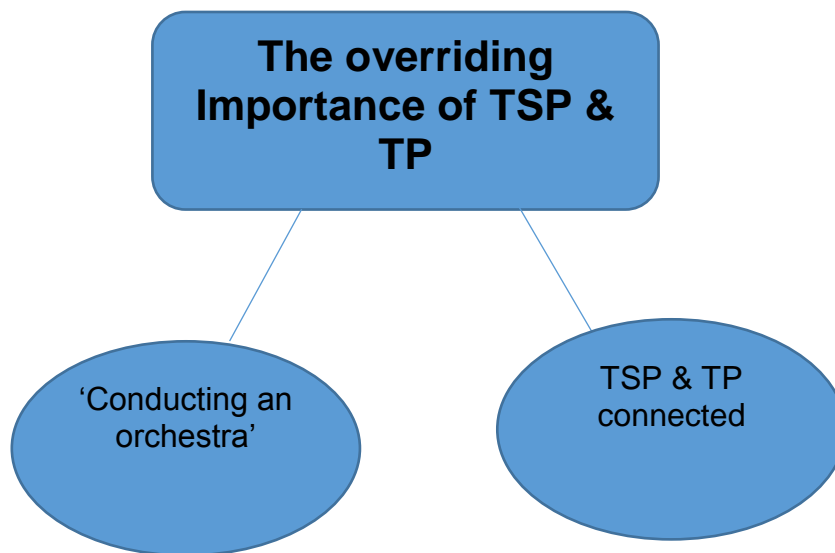
In the following exchange, A is discussing speaking the language. She highlights the necessity of speaking in order to learn the language but also equates speaking with intimacy:

*'You've got to speak you've absolutely got to- it's the only way you're going to get it. So that's immediately a much more intimate sort of communication'.*

In the questionnaire data, there appeared to be a conflation between LLP and SP (see Chapter 4, Table 10, Theme 1) and it was unclear whether or not respondents equated *any* form of interaction (i.e. even mechanistic language practice) with the projection of SP. However, interviewees talked about meaning-focussed aspects of language interaction through which SP would necessarily be projected in language learning contexts. For example, for B, the projection of SP in TL communication was important because *'you can use it to express emotions and feeling'* and as E stated: *'for me the very function of language is social interaction'*. Therefore, the interview data provided further insight into the survey data in relation to this sub-theme.

## **5.2 Overarching theme 2: The overriding importance of TSP and TP (RQ 1.3)**

The tutor's vital role as facilitator, manager of the online environment and of pedagogical content was an overarching theme in both questionnaires and interviews. The tutor was regarded as the prime orchestrator and needed to be skilful in terms of the projection of both TP and TSP, according to participants, with great importance attributed to both. Figure 23 presents this overarching theme and its sub-themes.



**Figure 23: Overriding importance of TSP & TP**

### **Sub-theme 5.2.1: 'Conducting an Orchestra'**

In common with the questionnaire respondents, participants were less forthcoming about any possibly unhelpful aspects of the SP of the tutor than they were about that of other learners. There was a perception amongst interviewees that TSP created an environment in which the learners could project their SP and also their LLP. The tutor's role was '*like conducting an orchestra*' (C); the tutor '*set the tone*' (C and H).

When discussing specific aspects of the SP of the tutor, participants highlighted the importance of warmth and encouragement (A, E and H) and sensitivity (F, E, C and H). Warmth and encouragement were related to learners feeling a sense of connection and immediacy with their tutor and, particularly, in an environment where many felt more distant due to the lack of body language cues. When talking about her tutor, A commented:

*'She never let anything go by without, sort of, and there was always warmth, you know. She would say, like 'that's really good' or, you know, um, that that you know um 'that isn't quite right but you've got a nice phrase there'. You know she was really good at making you feel, you know, like you were doing something worthwhile'.*

Sensitivity was important for participants because they felt a greater sense of exposure when communicating in the TL in *ElluminateLive* and sensitivity was therefore perceived to be conducive to LLP. For example, when talking about her tutor, H commented that he *'was actually really kind and he corrected people but he did it in a really nice way and you felt ok'*. In addition, F said that his tutor made *'every effort'* to include students who were *'obviously quite nervous'*. C and E disliked being *'put on the spot'* and appreciated their tutors' recognition of this. Warmth and sensitivity were therefore aspects of TSP which were particularly important in this online language learning context. As F said: *'and maybe this is even more so in Elluminate than face-to-face'*.

Participants also highlighted the importance of TP as a prerequisite for creating a climate where learners would feel comfortable to both project their SP and learn the language. For all participants, communicating confidence and a relaxed attitude in the use of these tools was important. As D said:

*'It, comes down to how comfortable they feel using the equipment and software and how much experience they have had of it'.*

C commented that if the tutor did not take charge of the online classroom, this would have a concomitant effect on mood and atmosphere. For J, students needed to feel confidence in the moderator's ability *'to manage the resources that they're given'*.



### Sub-theme 5.2.2: TSP and TP connected

There was evidence from the interview narratives that a function of TSP may be to enhance TP. This is illustrated by the following extract from C:

*'Yeh, yeh, you're there to learn the knowledge that they have to impart so regardless of anything else that you're wanting, they've got the knowledge that you want. Can I have it please? Can you get it across to me? You know, and so it's a case of just whatever it takes to get it across and obviously the better the atmosphere the nicer the mood and everything else then the better that comes across and that will draw the others in, it's like, you know, make a noise that everybody's interested in and they'll come and have a look to see what's going on kind of thing, so'.*

Further examples of the impact of TSP on TP, discussed by two participants, related to the need for different communication strategies online than in face to face contexts. H commented that the absence of body language made *'the tone of their voice really important'*. What was said needed to be carefully communicated, with sensitive consideration of the impact of voice unaccompanied by visual cues. In addition, D discussed dynamism in tutors. In comparison with some tutors who were able to bring materials to life because they were *'just so dynamic'*, she commented:

*'With others you've got something that's on the screen and it stays on the screen, and maybe ten minutes later it changes to a different screen, it was very kind of static'.*

For D, the tutor had to be *'over dynamic to create a bit of dynamism'*, thereby putting greater effort into the projection of self, online. TSP therefore needed to be more explicitly communicated online for this participant.

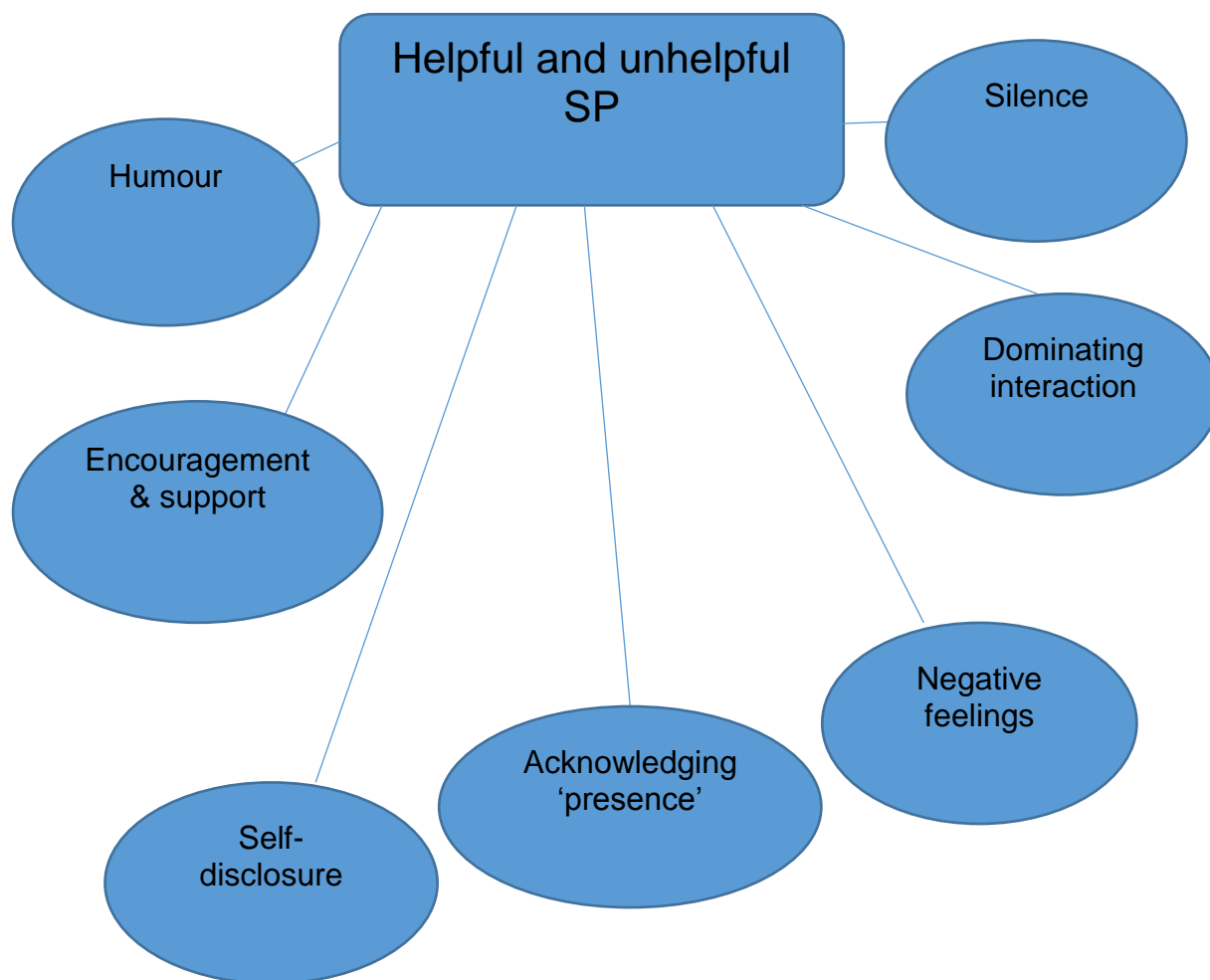
As for the survey data (section 4.1.1, Chapter 4), it was sometimes difficult to disaggregate from the interview narratives aspects of communication relating to TP and those relating to TSP. In the following extract, A is talking about the importance of her tutor's presence:

*'You need someone who's, well you know, holding the space, basically...you know, containing the group and being present for the group and I was aware that she really worked her socks off doing that, you know, and I mean I really did think she did a very good job of it'.*

It seems likely from the above extract that the tutor's efforts to '*hold the space*' and contain the group were related to *both* TP *and* TSP and therefore TSP and TP were mutually influential.

### **5.3 Overarching theme 3: Helpful and unhelpful SP (RQs 1.1, 1.2, 1.3)**

The data presented in this section relates to questions I asked participants about SP indicators in the survey questions. It also presents findings in relation to additional SP indicators, derived from the interviews. Not all SP indicators were positively experienced as facilitative in language learning and this is reflected in the over-arching theme and also echoes the survey findings. Sub-themes encapsulate meanings derived from the data in relation to specific SP indicators. The overarching and sub-themes are presented diagrammatically in Figure 24. In this section, I report meanings related to the SP of both tutor and learners.



**Figure 24: Helpful and unhelpful SP**

### **Sub-theme 5.3.1: Humour**

Humour was the most discussed SP indicator and there was a consensus that it was '*very important*' (G) or '*really important*' (E) in online language learning. Reasons for its importance, i.e. that it '*broke the ice*' (C), thereby facilitating a relaxed atmosphere and building group cohesion, were also reflected in the questionnaires. However, there were additional aspects to the importance of humour derived from the interviews. For E, humour facilitated TL communication for weaker learners: '*Some people get by with quite poor language but a really good sense of humour*'. For G, humour was particularly important in online

language learning due to the need to communicate in an '*intimidating*' environment.

For B, C, G and H, humour was regarded differently when it was projected by themselves or by other learners or the tutor. They felt reticent about projecting SP through humour because of the potential for misinterpretation in the absence of body language and visual feedback. For example, when discussing humour, H commented: '*I think with languages I think humour is very important*'. However, in relation to her individual SP, she went onto say:

*'I think that um as I say I think that it's very difficult to be humorous because you just don't know how that's going to be interpreted'*.

There was therefore variation in attitudes to the projection of humour depending on who was projecting it.

### **Sub-theme 5.3.2: Encouragement and support**

Encouragement and support were generally perceived as facilitative of language learning in that they boosted confidence when learners struggled with the language (A and C), gave '*positive reinforcement*' (B) and alleviated anxiety (A and C). In addition, for E, encouragement also '*fosters the social aspect*' as it encouraged a positive climate in which open communication would develop. In this sense, SP was perceived as generative of further SP.

Supportive aspects of SP were also thought to have greater significance in online language learning due to the constraints of the medium. This is indicated by B, when he said:

*'When I think, like, when I was trying to learn a language, to talk to somebody on the phone would be really quite daunting at the beginning and that's what Elluminate is, really, because you can't really see the other people. So I, I do think that, like, when you say something and the other classmates are listening or the tutor does the little clapping signal or one of the other students comments on it saying 'yeah that's terrific', or something, that does help, like, positive reinforcement, help you relax'.*

Contrary to the questionnaire findings, there was no sense from interviewees that they found encouragement patronising when given by other learners and not the tutor. What did emerge from the discussion, however, was that the means of projection of supportive aspects was not always perceived positively by all participants in a multimodal environment in which icons might be used for varying discourse functions. C commented: *'As regards the, using the little smilies and that for praise, I dunno, it's because they look so silly'*. The use of icons is further discussed in section 5.6 of this chapter.

### **Sub-theme 5.3.3: Self-disclosure**

The interview data corroborated that of the questionnaires in relation to perceptions of self-disclosure (either in the TL or English). Participants regarded self-disclosure as helpful as long as it was appropriate and did not detract from learning content. According to E, too much personal information is *'a real turn off'*. Allied to the notion of appropriacy, B also commented that self-disclosure gave him the impression of *'delaying the tutorial'* when communicated by other learners.

When self-disclosure was positively perceived, it was characterised as '*openness*' and '*shared experience*' (D) and it '*oils the social wheels*' (E). The impact on online language learning was in the development of community-building (cohesion), which was expressed by J as '*a sense that we are all in this together*'.

#### **Sub-theme 5.3.4: Acknowledging presence**

An aspect of SP, also identified in the questionnaire data, was that of acknowledging the presence of the other. For participants, acknowledging presence seemed to refer to the cohesive value for participants of feeling that others acknowledged their individual presence. This was particularly important online in the absence of welcoming body language cues. Two examples are from interviews with A and F. When discussing another learner, A commented that she felt good when her colleague '*just made it clear that she was aware that I existed*'. In addition, F valued the fact that his tutor welcomed him '*by name*' as he arrived. Naming was particularly important for this participant as she also felt anxious that she had mastered the technology and entered the correct online room. This acknowledgement of presence therefore helped to alleviate her initial anxiety, when studying online.

Concomitantly, the importance of the acknowledgement of presence was highlighted by D who was frustrated when she felt ignored by her moderator and this negatively affected D's sense of feeling valued. As she said: '*You're waving your hand and it's just not, it's not picked up*'. For participant D, the hands-up facility sometimes felt frustrating when she had to wait for each preceding student to speak first. The use of this tool entailed clicking on the hands-up icon and then

waiting to speak in order of who had clicked first (shown by the numbers 1, 2, 3 and so on in *IlluminateLive*).

### **Sub-theme 5.3.5: Negative feelings**

When discussing the projection of their individual SP, there was evidence from some participants that negative feelings could be projected and recognised by others through tone of voice. The following examples are from interviews with A and E. A was discussing her frustration at the lack of body language cues in *IlluminateLive* and commented: '*I bring myself in in the sense that, probably, I sound distinctly grumpy*'. E talked about a poorly organised tutorial and commented: '*It can be a bit irritating, then, perhaps, that can creep into your voice and it's not the fault of your partner*'.

With respect to the SP of other learners, all participants recognised anxiety, despite the absence of visual cues, either interpreted as anxiety through the silence of the other or because the anxious student could sound a '*bit nervous and breathless*' (E). The projection of a negative SP was considered to have a negative impact on the further development of SP by participants. Anxiety is discussed in more detail in Section 5.4.

### **Sub-theme 5.3.6: Dominating interaction**

Dominating behaviour was discussed by interview participants in terms of its negative impact on interaction. Dominating was understood as monopoly of the online space. B commented that without the careful management of the tutor '*the stronger or quicker students may monopolise the session*'. For D, the '*big people stay big*', and this made shyer, less confident participants '*hesitate and be less*

*forthcoming*'. In addition, D also highlighted that in the absence of body language cues, the effects of dominating behaviour could not be diluted as easily as they would be in face to face contexts.

*'I think the people who are quieter I think it, it, makes them hesitate and be less forthcoming than maybe if they'd been in a, in a, real visual situation where you can tease it out'.*

For C, dominating behaviour was also associated with excessive focus on self and inappropriate self-disclosure which would detract from lesson content. For F, dominating students were '*very annoying*' and this felt annoyance impacted on the projection of his (negative) SP. F referred to '*hogging the mic*' and the inability of other learners to interrupt through the spoken mode, once an individual had clicked on the microphone to speak.

### **Sub-theme 5.3.7: Silence**

In the specific online context, the lack of visual feedback made silence '*worrying*' (G). Silent students were perceived as '*there but not there*' (A) and there was a sense, from the data, that silence, paradoxically, had an imposing presence because other learners worried about why an individual learner was silent.

Participants showed an awareness of varied reasons for silence, i.e. anxiety, lack of confidence, a lower level of language proficiency compared to others and technical failures. Silence compounded a sense of the difficulty of working online for A, and aroused feelings of anxiety in F, who suggested that silence might also be due to '*they're thinking that you're a complete idiot in terms of what you're*



saying'. Nobody thought that silence might occur because someone was working (consulting a dictionary, notes or a website relevant to the activity, for example).

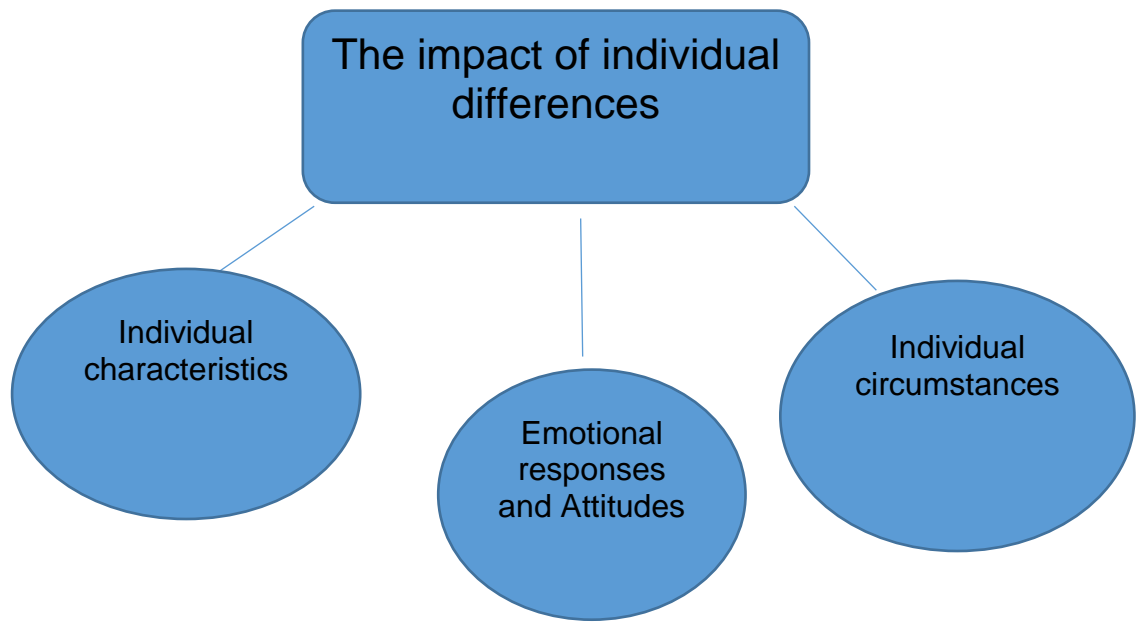
In addition, silence from the moderator was also perceived as unnerving. D commented that her moderator was sometimes silent with no explanation and this disrupted the 'flow' of the session. This presence of the silent participant was therefore construed negatively by participants.

## **5.4 Overarching theme 4: The impact of individual differences (RQ 2.2)**

Awareness of individual differences was an overarching theme, reflected both in the narratives of participants and also in the varying stances adopted by participants to the topics discussed in the interviews. There was evidence from the data that individual differences would mediate the perception of the SP of others, and the communication of SP of the individual with an impact on group interaction. This was summarised by A, who commented:

*'Yeah you know this is very interesting because this is a whole new angle on it that actually people are coming from such different places with different motivations and that in itself is going to have a big effect on dynamic'.*

Figure 25 represents the sub-themes and overarching themes.



**Figure 25: Individual differences**

### **Sub-theme 5.4.1: Individual characteristics**

Two interviewees mentioned being shy as an inhibiting factor in the projection of their online SP and how they might be perceived by others in that they preferred to 'sit back' (B and C) and let others take the initiative. However, for C, working online was a positive experience because she felt less exposed than she would feel in a face to face context:

*'You don't have to like sort of shrink away in a corner and try and hide that because you're already shrunk away in a corner and you can quite happily hide it, because there, there's a nice hiding place, immediately, kind of thing, you know'.*

What C called the 'anonymity' of the environment had a facilitative effect on her ability to project her SP when invited to participate.

Equally, there was an awareness in other interviews that open communication, necessary for language learning, may be easier for some students when working online. E and H cited shy students as an example but they also commented on their experiences of working alongside autistic students for whom learning languages in *ElluminateLive* seemed to be a less stressful experience than in face to face contexts.

For E, her natural predisposition to be sociable, her '*sheer curiosity and a sort of basic need to be with others and communicate*' drove her to take the initiative to project her personality online but there was also the sense that she facilitated the SP of other learners as she said she wanted to '*reach out*' to others, '*listen and not dominate, myself*', ask questions leading to '*an exchange of ideas and also to encourage other students*'.

Different individual characteristics of tutors were also mentioned by C, D, E, H and F and there was a shared perception that tutors with a positive, outgoing nature were more likely to generate a climate conducive to promoting LSP . For D, the tutor needed to be '*dynamic*' and, according to E: '*It does help a lot obviously to have a confident moderator who sets you off*'. The importance of the tutor moderator in managing the online environment was discussed in Section 5.2.

### **Sub-theme 5.4.2: Emotional responses and attitudes**

Although most (but not all) participants found *ElluminateLive* challenging and anxiety-provoking as a medium for learning languages, they varied in their emotional responses and attitudes, and these variations impacted on the projection of their SP. For example, A felt '*disengaged*' and negative. She

described the projection of a 'grumpy' SP and said everything felt '*too difficult*'. B compared his attitude to learning in *ElluminateLive* with speaking on the phone, which he did not find comfortable. On the other hand, D found *ElluminateLive* useful because it was like being on the phone and she was therefore eager and ready to practise what she considered to be useful language skills in the absence of visual presence. C and E referred to their drive to communicate, and overriding motivation to learn the language. As C commented: '*Just the mere fact of being in an environment with others who are bringing their experience to the table, bring it on*'.

Confidence within the online environment was recognised as important in the projection of individual SP. For F, projecting his personality was '*really important*' but, as he said: '*It comes down again to the level of confidence*'. When discussing differences in level within an individual tutorial, what emerged from the interviews was that confidence and perceptions of tolerance in others were more important than actual differences. The interview data, therefore, both corroborated and extended the questionnaire data in this respect.

For A, working with a student who she perceived to be at a higher level, had a negative impact on her feelings and on what she felt she could contribute. This student had '*pretty good German to start with and so can sort of do things, you know, say the right things and so on*'. The impact on A was that she felt '*confused*' and '*stupid*' and, as she said: '*That's part of that whole sort of thing*'. For A, lack of confidence impeded her participation. On the other hand, E commented that she gained a '*huge advantage*' from being partnered with a student at a higher level of proficiency, given that her partner was '*very tolerant of my lesser ability*'.

For G, being tolerant of different levels was also felt to be important. As she said:

*'I think, I think, having a tolerance of sort of different levels at which you're going to get some students who are, you know, fluent and others who can barely string a sentence together and um if there's irritation on the part of those who are much more fluent, then that can be really, really off-putting and I think that's why, you know, empathy and really cultivating a sense of, you know, we're here to help each other is important - especially in languages'.*

Clearly, perceptions of the projection of positive SP by others (tolerance, empathy) and positive or negative affect, located in the individual, influenced SP or LLP or a mixture of the two for the individual learner.

### **Sub-theme 5.4.3: Individual circumstances**

These impacted on the development of a feeling of community for A in that:

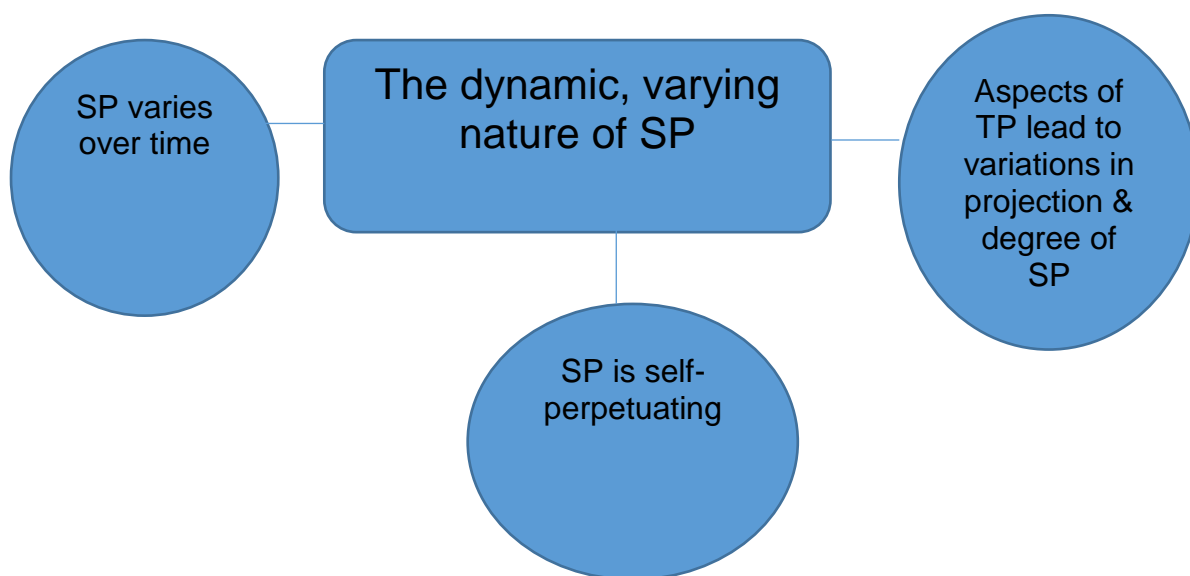
*'The sort of different range, the huge range between us, didn't make for an easy sort of sense of a community, working together'.*

B talked about his demanding job as a chef and the fact that he was often *'tired'* when he went into online tutorials and this impacted on how much he was willing to communicate. A discussed her profession as a psychotherapist and training to react to body language cues. In the absence of these, she found *IlluminateLive* *'challenging'* and *'alienating'* from the outset. Finally, E cited her age as an impediment to working online: *'I mean I'm 64 and I recognise that I'm, you know, there are some things that I just don't do as well as I did when I was young'*. For

this participant learning the language and also learning how to use the tools of the environment felt especially *'difficult'*.

## 5.5 Overarching theme 5: The dynamic, varying nature of SP (RQs 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 2.1, 2.3)

The interviews provided insight into the dynamic, varying nature of SP. The questionnaire respondents showed awareness of fluctuations in SP; therefore the content of this section corroborates the themes identified in the survey. However, overarching and sub-themes, presented here, significantly extend the questionnaire data to give greater insight into SP as a dynamic, varying phenomenon. This overarching theme and its sub-themes are represented in Figure 26.



**Figure 26: The dynamic, varying nature of SP**

### Sub-theme 5.5.1: SP varies over time

Participants mentioned that SP develops over time, either across a series of tutorials or within one tutorial. Development of SP was related to a developing

sense of community and also to increased confidence of learners and to feeling relaxed and comfortable in the environment.

With respect to the development of a sense of community, several participants acknowledged that this was easier once learners had met face to face. However, variable attendance was discussed in eight of the nine interviews as an impediment to community development, resulting from the voluntary nature of tutorial attendance at the Open University.

Feeling '*relaxed and comfortable*' in the environment was also related to growing familiarity with its technological aspects and the need to participate in order to learn a language. H commented:

*'You can actually have really good discussions once you feel more comfortable but it does take some time to feel confident in Elluminate- maybe one or two tutorials to feel really happy with it'.*

On the other hand, a developing sense of the personalities of other learners might be achieved by the end of a session. According to E:

*'By the end of an Elluminate session I think that one has quite a reasonable, whether it's correct or not that's not for me to say, but quite a reasonable sense of judging of whether people have a sense of humour, which personally I think is really important, whether they're relatively introvert or extrovert, and whether they're a good collaborator'.*

### **Sub-theme 5.5.2: SP is self-perpetuating**

This sub-theme, specifically discussed here, has been evident in the quotations shown in this chapter. However, it is perhaps most clearly expressed in the following extract from B who is talking about using the applause facility:

*'If someone, you know, did something good, other people might applaud or someone might start applauding and other people might join'.*

B perceived that SP communicated via the applause facility would be imitated by others. For C, SP had a self-perpetuating quality, given that once she started to relax, that would *'further help the atmosphere'*.

The self-perpetuating nature of SP was also evidenced in comments related to group dynamics. For all participants, group dynamics were important, generated (or not) by the development of interaction with other learners but also by the tutor whose role, as previously discussed, was perceived as pivotal. What was meant by group dynamics for interviewees was the development of intimacy and rapport in which *'personalities can bounce off one another'* (K) and rapport was perceived to facilitate both open communication and learning:

*'I've found the better the rapport amongst the students themselves', the more you get out of it. It's easier to let the inhibitions drop and so is learning'* (K)

Participants acknowledged that learners differed in their sociability, that a critical mass in terms of student numbers was necessary for group dynamics to develop and that the generation of a negative group dynamic was equally possible. Factors related to the tools and functionalities of the online environment, i.e. technological failures, had a negative impact, and the audio tool was not facilitative of spontaneous interaction. In addition, individual differences, discussed in the



previous section, would impact on group dynamics either positively or negatively. Group dynamics were perceived as a qualitative aspect of SP which was both cause and effect. As C said: '*The better the way the personalities mix together the nicer the environment for the actual students*'

### **Sub-theme 5.5.3: Aspects of TP lead to variations in the projection and degree of SP**

Other variations in SP were related to structure and to the nature of the tasks or activities (aspects of TP). For both A and D, having a tightly structured environment (in terms of the organisation and sequencing of activities) inhibited the development of SP. Both participants, compared the structured nature of language tutorials negatively with their experiences in asynchronous forums where there was little structure, but rather the opportunity to freely express opinions. For most participants, however, structure was welcomed as a containing framework which offered security when working online and therefore promoted SP. For C, the opportunity to prepare for her tutorial in advance via the provision of a plan from her tutor was facilitative, given that, without this, she felt like '*a rabbit in headlights*', when faced with the daunting prospect of learning a language online.

All participants acknowledged that the nature of tasks influenced their level of engagement and that language tasks and activities could promote SP to a varying extent. For E, '*mechanistic*' activities did not encourage her to participate but she recognised that a) such tasks might appeal to others b) not all authentic language communication necessarily involved high degrees of social presence (asking for directions, for example). Other participants varied in their responses to the same tasks. For example, some used imaginative tasks as a vehicle for the projection of their SP, whilst others felt '*put on the spot*' by them, even though they were '*good*'

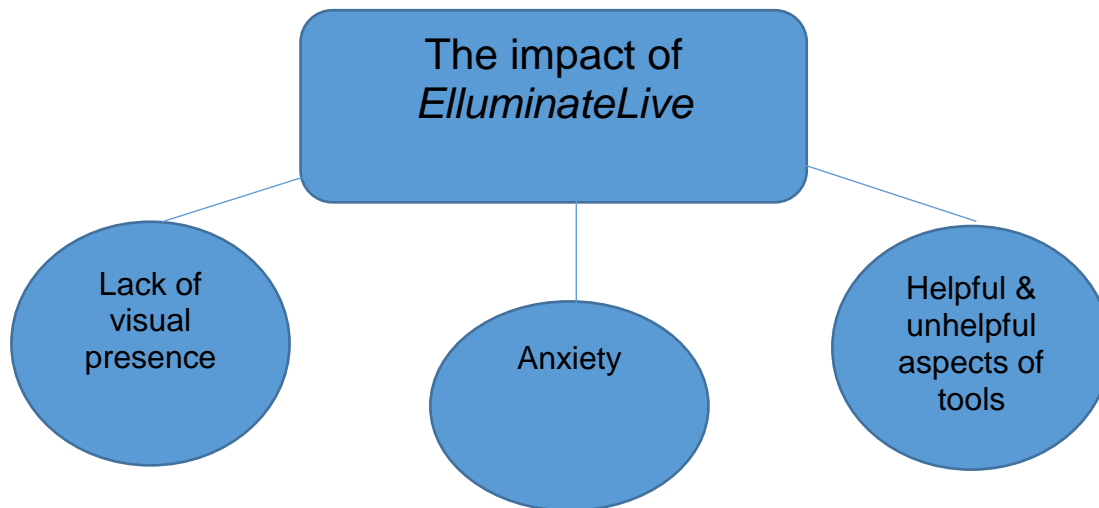
*linguists'* (J). This feeling was related to the anonymity of the environment and the inability of judging the responses of other learners from visual cues.

Related to the notion that degree of SP was affected by the nature of tasks was the perception that at lower levels (i.e. modules aimed at lower levels of language proficiency), degree of SP communicated as a component of any task was limited, whereas at higher levels ('*second course*' in the extract, below), there was more opportunity to project SP: This was expressed by E:

*'I suppose at the lower levels of language some of the exercises are very grammatical and you can't, erm you're not communicating much socially through some of those mechanistic exercises, but as from even the middle of the second course, one is beginning to discuss a little, give opinions. It is interesting to swap opinions, that sort of exercise really advances the social, even in the second course giving your opinion about various day to day things'.*

## **5.6 Overarching theme 6: The impact of *ElluminateLive* (RQs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3)**

This overarching theme has been represented in many of the extracts discussed in this chapter. This section specifically focusses on data relating to participant perceptions of the mediating effects of the online environment on their experiences of SP and language learning. Figure 27 presents overarching and sub-themes.



**Figure 27: the impact of *ElluminateLive***

### **Sub-theme 5.6.1: Lack of visual presence**

As discussed in Section 5.2.2, lack of body language cues was a mediating variable in the projection of the SP of the tutor due to the need to adopt compensatory strategies (i.e. adjusted tone of voice). In terms of its impact on participation, most interviewees considered lack of visual presence as negative, and for reasons related to the absence of feedback communicated via body language. As D said:

*'I find it's really difficult to gauge that person you're in dialect with. It's missing a great big thing for me, and I like to look [laughs], not that I look at people, I like to look at people and see their reaction and it just makes me feel more confident as well. So I've, I've found these online tutorials, because you can't see that person either, I find that quite distracting.'*

For this participant, lack of visual presence also affected her confidence. For others it felt *'frustrating'* (J) or *'all so difficult'* (A). In addition, it was acknowledged

that *'the moderator (tutor) would pick up certain things'* (D) in a face to face language classroom context which would not be immediately obvious in *IlluminateLive*. The impact on language learning was both indirect, i.e. aspects of social communication were inhibited or negative feelings generated, but also more direct, as lack of body language cues inhibited understanding. As one participant stated:

*'I sometimes misunderstand things and, and, sometimes I'm at the computer going, 'what do you want me to say? I don't know; and sometimes it could be clearer because of it' (C).*

### **Sub-theme 5.6.2: Anxiety**

Allied to the limitations of the medium with its lack of visual presence was the sub-theme of anxiety. Participants found it challenging to learn a language in such an environment as feelings of vulnerability were already present, owing to the subject studied and the need to participate. As one participant stated:

*'You're speaking in a different language and that automatically for me, and for many other students I'm guessing, puts, puts you a little bit on edge because you're aware you're trying to speak in a different language and it's quite difficult err and people might be judging your pronunciation and things like that ... . And then Illuminate that's another addition to the fear factor I suppose' (H).*

Participants described their own feelings of anxiety: *'I never stopped feeling slightly nervous'* (D) and/or recognised these feelings in others: *'Some people are very scared'* (J). The medium was also described as *'daunting'* (B) or *'intimidating'* (G).

Anxiety was connected to having the confidence to participate and therefore directly impacted on LLP. As one participant stated: *'In Elluminate you have this wall of silence and if, if somebody feels intimidated, it's very difficult to lighten it'* (G). Moreover, technology could be used as a mask to hide nervousness:

*'If somebody is lacking confidence they can pretend that they've got technical problems, can't they, and disappear'* (D).

The medium, therefore, made participants nervous and this impacted on SP (i.e. in the projection of anxiety) with an accompanying impact on the atmosphere of the tutorial. In addition, anxiety might have a more direct effect on SP as some students would leave the online room.

### **Sub-theme 5.6.3: Helpful and unhelpful aspects of tools**

The affordances and limitations of the tools of *ElluminateLive* mediated SP for participants. On the other hand, attitudes to these affordances and limitations were also a mediating factor.

In relation to the limitations of the tools of *ElluminateLive*, participants mentioned, its *'unwieldy'* nature (B), its *'clunkyness'* (A) , the need to click on and off the microphone in order to speak (D), and frequent technological failures or difficulties (all). According to the interviewees, these aspects inhibited the development of SP (for example, when the audio facility failed) or modified the projection of SP in that *'given the technology and the switching on and off of microphones, it's not as spontaneous so that's another thing that slows it down'* (D). Within the context of online language learning and the need to practise speaking skills, these limitations

impacted on learning for participants. As H said: *'I think, very rarely did I feel that I was just interacting normally and that illuminate wasn't you know in between us'*.

On the other hand, five interviewees also mentioned positive aspects such as the possibility of practising the language in real time without incurring the expense of travel to a classroom, which in the case of Open University students, could be a long distance from home. For one interviewee, convenience impacted directly on presence as she commented: *'This is an excellent substitute given that I wouldn't want to keep on travelling to Nottingham'* (D).

The immediacy of the online tools, the ticks and crosses, emoticons and comments in the text chat, were valued by participants for their feedback oriented to both social interaction and language content. As one participant commented:

*'It's nice to be in the middle of a long, y'know, a reasonably long speech of, I dunno, what you did on holiday last time and when you're using a clever bit of language the tutor makes the clapping signal or a thumbs up, or something, that is quite nice'* (B).

Reflecting the survey data, the text chat was the most valued tool for its immediacy and simplicity when used supportively and to foster participation. D stated: *'It helps you to be able to participate'*; she also liked the facility to use the chat to talk to individual learners.

*'I do tend to use the text chat to sort of just talk a little bit more informally and, sometimes, it's just nice to have a little bit of a joke with other students... with a fellow student or a colleague in the text chat'*.

A further positive aspect of the text chat mentioned by B was that it was more *'comfortable'* (also reflected in the questionnaire data) in the sense of less threatening than the audio tool and this notion was reflected by H who found it less *'formal'* than the audio facility. On the other hand, the social use of the text chat was considered distracting by two participants, when used by other learners and the tutor.

The limitations of the audio facility were discussed in relation to technical failures, and the need to click on and off, which reduced spontaneity. Affective attitudes to the audio, i.e. that it induced anxiety and feelings of exposure as *'it feels more public'* (H) in the online context were also expressed by interviewees. The predominant attitude to the audio was negative, due to its limitations and the feelings it invoked. Again this reflects the findings of the questionnaire data.

Attitudes to emoticons depended on who was using them and also, as stated in section 5.3.2, on their meaning-making potential in online multimodal discourse. A theme extracted from the questionnaire data was a dislike of emoticons as they could be ambiguous and this led to a reticence to use them for individual SP. In the interviews, respondents also perceived that emoticons could be misinterpreted by others, i.e. that they were being mocked, for example. Additionally, emoticons were perceived as encouraging polarised reactions (C). When discussing their reductive nature C commented:

*'And no I don't want to, I don't want my SP to be reflected by that silly little smiley face, I don't want them to think that that's me. If that's the only way you can portray yourself within that online environment then I don't want that to represent me, I don't want that to be my avatar as it were'.*

However, when used by other learners to communicate with the individual learner, emoticons were appreciated by the individual (D and H) and the paradoxical nature of this greater tolerance of others, as opposed to self, was not lost on D who said: *'Yeah, I was quite amused at my own response, there, having dismissed the icons for my own use'*.

## 5.7 Summary

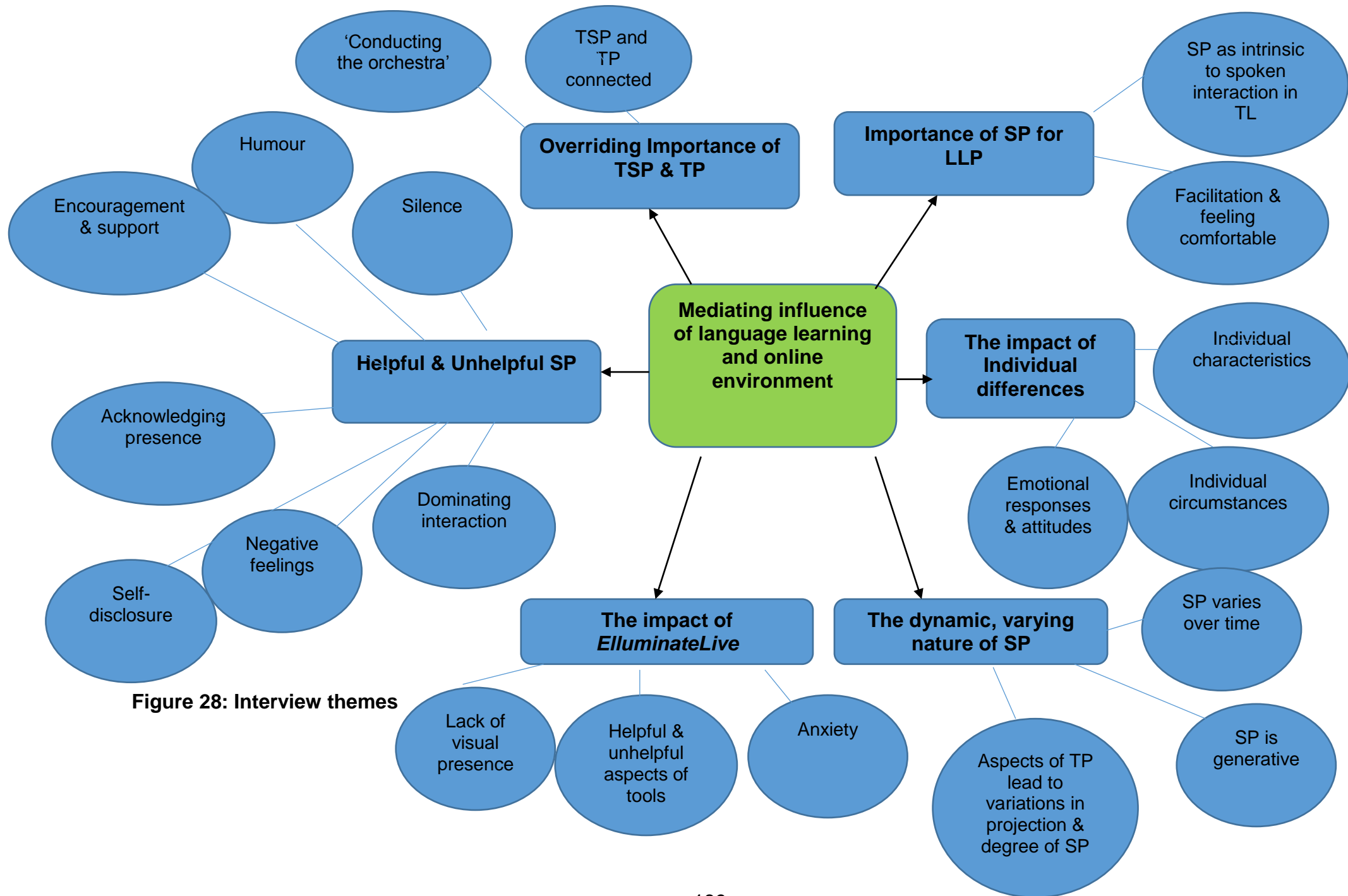
The overarching themes and sub-themes discussed in this chapter reflect to a great extent those identified from the survey data in Chapter 4. However, as discussed in Chapter 4, the survey themes were emergent. The interviews gave greater insight into the connections between themes and the development of a narrative, which indicates why SP is important for participants within *IlluminateLive*.

I complete this chapter with a thematic map (Figure 28), which summarises the six overarching themes and their sub-themes, discussed in this chapter. However, I have argued in this thesis that SP needs to be studied in relation to what I have called two primary mediating variables, i.e. subject area and bespoke online environment. These primary mediating variables necessarily transform the meanings derived from learner perceptions of SP reported in this chapter and are shown in the green box in the centre of Figure 28. The arrows leading from them to each of the six overarching themes represent their mediating impact on these six themes.

It could be argued that some interview findings might equally apply to face to face contexts, i.e. individual differences will impact on the projection of SP face to face.



However, throughout this chapter I have identified aspects of the narratives of learners which relate to their experience of learning languages in *IlluminateLive*.



**Figure 28: Interview themes**

## **Chapter 6: Findings from tutorial observations**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, extracts from online tutorial observations are presented. These extracts are illustrative and do not represent the totality of findings. The aim of tutorial observations was to triangulate data derived from the interviews and to gather more information about the nature and role of SP. In order to achieve this aim, I observed recorded online tutorials and identified sequences of interaction within which SP indicators were contextualised and which provided further insight into the themes derived from the interviews.

The chapter is organised into sections according to the overarching themes identified from the interview data. Not all associated sub-themes were observable in the data. Where findings are related to more than one overarching theme, this is indicated. Additional aspects of SP, which were not identified in the interviews, are also reported. As for Chapters 4 and 5, the findings of this chapter are discussed in relation to the wider literature in Chapter 7.

The method of analysis is the use of my revised version of the Col framework in which I redefined the categories and indicators of three presences for online language learning contexts (Chapter 3, Tables 5, 6 and 7). I also use multimodal analysis to identify the salient features of multimodality which impact on online presence. With respect to the revised Col framework, one of the findings of this chapter was the difficulty in differentiating between presences and between categories and indicators of presences in data analysis. This is further discussed in this chapter and in Chapter 7.

Tutorial extracts are colour-coded throughout this chapter according to the presences identified (TP = blue, SP = yellow, LLP = green). I also use orange to denote a merger of LLP and SP and grey to denote a merger of TP and TSP. Students are differentiated in each extract as 'S1', 'S2' etc. However, 'S1' and 'S2' do not refer to the same students from one extract to the next throughout this chapter. A key to the abbreviations used in the transcribed extracts is located in Appendix 11. Keys to my analysis of interaction in relation to the Col presences are provided in Appendix 12.

Finally, interaction in the selected extracts is sometimes in English and sometimes in the TL, depending on the nature of interaction. Each extract has been transcribed according to what I could hear; therefore any mistakes in language are those of participants. I have also added a column to each transcribed extract containing a translation in English, where appropriate. Translations respect, as far as possible, the observed interaction and this is also reflected in my use of transcription symbols. Errors in English represent errors I identified in the interaction demonstrated in the foreign language. Transcription symbols are located in Appendix 10.

## 6.1 The importance of SP for LLP (O/a theme 1)

For research participants, SP was considered to be important for LLP. In this section I discuss examples from the online data which corroborate the perceptions of learners and also provide further detail about the role of SP for LLP in *IlluminateLive*



### 6.1.1 Facilitation and feeling comfortable (Sub-theme 5.1.1)

According to learner perceptions, SP has an important impact on LLP because it is facilitative and promotes feelings of comfort. The following extract demonstrates the effective resolution of a problem in a sequence of interactive turns in which SP is projected by the tutor and a student. The extract relates to the affective dimension of SP and the SP indicators of expressing reassurance and support and the apparent impact on further projection of affective SP and on the interactive dimension. It also demonstrates the complex interplay of presences in online discourse.

Both tutor and student 2 (S2) identify the need to reassure and support student 1 (S1). The teaching activity immediately prior to Extract 1 focussed upon the vocabulary of feelings and cultural aspects of the expression of feelings. S1 has remained silent for several minutes. In turn 1 (T1), he seems confused (and possibly anxious) that he has missed something and projects a mixture of both SP (expressing confusion) and LLP (seeking clarification). In turns 2, 4 and 5, there is reassurance and support given in response to S1's initial question in T1. This reassurance is characterised by a juxtaposition of TP (advising and explaining about course content) and TSP (reassuring) in Ts 2 and 4, and LSP in T5 (S2 also

reassures S1). It seems to facilitate the communication of SP by S1 (Ts 3 & 6). In addition, S1 seems satisfied with the responses he has received, as is demonstrated in T6. In the period immediately following the transcribed extract, S1 participated equally in the tutorial with the other students. It appeared, therefore, that the reassurance and support given by the tutor and S2 to S1, enabled S1 to re-establish his presence and engage with the session content.

Following T1, S1 switches tool from microphone to text chat (T3), possibly because the text chat affords immediate communication in contrast with the microphone which learners need to request to use via the hands-up facility. S1 communicates his relief or satisfaction, and is able to reinforce this with smileys (Ts 3 and 6). S2 also uses the text chat to reassure S1, and his 'lol' (T5) perhaps contributes to this reassurance because of its relaxed informality. His support of S1 is not only instantaneous but immediately visible to all participants. He is able to effectively mirror his tutor's reassurance of S1 through the affordance of the text chat. Hence the relevance of multimodality to the interaction demonstrated in Extract 1.

T	Actor	Audio	Text chat
1	S1	Yes (.) erm (.) I was wondering err we covered a lot of err these err different (.) these variations for how to say how you are feeling but where all this in the grammar book or the lesson one because I almost feel the lesson is from the colloquial Italian (.) but I haven't found all these ways of err expressing things	
2	Tutor	(2) You're right S1 (.) most of these are not covered yet (.) yet in the book (.) for instance (.) mi sento is covered later (.) I think one of you mentioned mi sento so I've took (.) I've taken the opportunity to say (.) YES you can use mi sento (.) I'm feeling (.) erm (.) but it's covered much later (.) for instance the expression mi sento is covered much later in the course (.) in this tutorial the idea really is to brainstorm a few terms but erm erm for as far as assessment is concerned so for the TMAs (.) don't worry err I mean err follow the book (.) the units (.) what you are assessed on (.) so you don't have to go (.) don't have to do more for each TMA because you are assessed on on just the terms that you have learned in the course (.) the tutorial is really an opportunity to practise the Italian and maybe learn even more terms erm (.) early on it's really about as far as assessment is concerned (.) you won't (.) you won't be penalised (.) you won't be gain more marks or be penalised or gain more marks if you are using expressions which are not assessed yet (.) which are not assessed erm err at this time in the course (.) indeed it would be dis (.) it would be disadvantageous for the students who are (.) who has (.) who do not know the terms and haven't studied them yet so don't worry about it (.) just you can focus on just the terms we've learned in unit 1	
3	S1		i thought I had missed a lot somehow....  thx
4	Tutor	No (.) S1 don't worry (.) usually the style of my tutorial is that I stay within the unit but sometimes you see a student who mentions (.) uses an expression and I take the chance to say oh yes (.) you can use this expression and it means this (.) but if you don't remember this S1 at this stage (.) don't worry really (.) non preoccuparti (.) don't worry	
5	S2		Lol, don't worry, most of these are just good to know
6	S1		No problem, it's nice to hear more 

### Extract 1

### **6.1.2 SP as intrinsic to LLP (Sub-theme 5.1.2)**

The second reason given for the importance of SP by research participants was the link between LLP and SP, given that social interaction was considered to be essential in language learning.

With respect to both tutors and learners, open communication<sup>13</sup> in the TL (interactive dimension) was a feature of the observations at all levels but this increased with language level. In tutorials at advanced level, most spoken communication was conducted in the TL, with an accompanying increase in the projection of task-related or off-task SP. At lower levels both task-related and off-task SP (in spoken/written modes) was projected using either the TL or English. At advanced levels and where activities were oriented to social interaction, there was a merger of presences. SP, in the spoken/written modes, therefore developed according to language level.

In Extract 2 students are engaged in an activity in which they have to describe their day, using the microphone and it is S1's turn. Turns 2, 4, and 6 demonstrate a mixture of SP and LLP as the primary purpose of the activity is to interact for the purpose of language learning (LLP) but the means is free communication (SP). TP and TSP also seem to merge in this extract as the tutor facilitates by initiating and moving forward the conversation (Ts 1, 3 and 5). However, there is a clear shift to TP in T7.

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<sup>13</sup> I use the terms 'open communication' and 'free communication' interchangeably in this thesis



T	Actor	Audio	Translation
1	Tutor	S1 (.) la journée était comment pour vous (0.5) pour toi	S1 (.) how was your day (0.5) your day ((using informal form))
2	S1	Bon (.) j'étais err (.) ici chez moi (.) mais j'ai (.) je faisais erm mon devoir le le TMA aujourd'hui (.) et aussi il y avait	Well (.) I was err (.) here at my house (.) but I was doing erm my homework the the TMA today (.) and also there was
3	Tutor	C'est très bien (.) oui ((echo))	That's very good (.) yes
4	S1	il y avait des orages et nous avons eu des problèmes (.) maintenant nous n'avons pas de l'eau erm et il y avait	There were storms and we had problems (.) now we don't have any water erm there were
5	Tutor	De l'eau? De l'eau?	Water? Water?
6	S1	Non (.) pas de l'eau de mains ((laughs)) err (.) mais (.) erm (.) mais err (.) nous avons perdu aussi l'électricité pour quelques minutes (0.5) mais ça c'est err ça ça re erm (.) ça c'est revenue maintenant (.) mais le de l'eau c'est coupé	No (.) no mains water ((laughs)) err (.) but erm (.) but err (.) we also lost the electricity for a few minutes (0.5) but that err that that err that came erm (.) that has come back now (.) but the water is off
7	Tutor	Ah c'est compliqué (( echo)) err normalement en français on dit (0.5) on a tendance à dire (0.5) l'eau de ville (.) l'eau de ville parce que généralement c'est l'eau qui vient de des ( ) de la ville ( )	Ah that's complicated err normally we say in French (0.5) we tend to say town water (0.5) town water (.) because generally it's water that comes from ( ) from the town ( )

## Extract 2

In Extract 3, the tutor is chatting with a student at the start of a session and the interaction in this example is not task-related. The tutor knows the student (this extract was taken from later on in the course) and jokes with her in T5. The student is also jovial (Ts 4, 6, 8). There is therefore familiarity and informality which perhaps signal that SP has developed over time (O/a theme 5; Sub-theme 5.5.1). Although the interaction is socially-oriented, additional purposes are TP and LLP (the tutor facilitates by asking questions; all interaction is conducted in the TL). In T9, the tutor introduces a colloquialism 'bof', which signals the switch from TSP/TP to TP.

T	Actor	Audio	Translation
1	Tutor	Bonsoir S1 (0.5) comment ça va ?	Good evening S1 (0.5) how are you?
2	S1	Bonsoir (.) ça va très bien (.) merci	Good evening (.) I'm fine (.) thanks
3	Tutor	S1 (.) vous êtes où? ((echo))	S1 (.) where are you?
4	S1	Err (.) Je suis dans un hôtel à Wimslow ((laughs))	Err (.) I'm in a hotel in Wimslow ((laughs))
5	Tutor	Quelle vacances de luxe ((echo))	What a luxury holiday ((echo))
6	S1	Ah non ((laughs)) err (.) je travaille (2) c'est pour ma travail	Ah no ((laughs)) err (.) I'm working (2) it's for my work
7	Tutor	Et l'hôtel (.) c'est (2) un bon hôtel? ((echo))	And the hotel (.) It's (2) a good hotel? ((echo))
8	S1	Non hmm (.) c'est Premier Inn ((laughs))	No hmm (.) it's Premier Inn ((laughs))
9	Tutor	ok (.) bon (.) on peut dire bof ((echo))	ok (.) well (.) we can say not so good ((echo))

### Extract 3

The medium of interaction in Extracts 2 and 3 is the microphone. However, in order to maintain the flow of discussion, the tutor (in both extracts) clicks on and off his microphone, producing an unpleasant echoing sound at various points (Extract 2, Ts 3, 7; Extract 3, Ts 3, 5, 7, 9). Poor sound quality also seems to trigger the overlaps in Extract 2 (Ts 2/3; 4/5). Clarity of communication is therefore impeded by technology. For interview participants, microphone failures were viewed negatively (O/a theme 6; Sub-theme 5.6.3). There is a facility in *IlluminateLive* to set the microphone for two or more simultaneous speakers. The tutor (Extracts 2 and 3) has not done this, perhaps because use of this facility tends to exacerbate sound quality.

## **6.2 The overriding importance of TSP and TP (O/a theme 2)**

TSP and TP were considered to be crucial by interview participants for the development of LSP and LLP. In this section I discuss some observed aspects of TSP and TP.

### **6.2.1 ‘Conducting an orchestra’ (Sub-theme 5.2.1)**

There were examples of the tutor’s pivotal role in modelling SP, and also of promoting a climate in which learners could project both their SP and LLP. The following extract relates to the affective dimension of SP and its indicators, praise, warmth and encouragement. It demonstrates the impact of the tutor’s praise on the expression of further praise and also on group cohesion.

In Extract 4, two students (S1 and S2) have completed a roleplay activity to order food in a café. In T1, the tutor praises the students using the microphone. This praise is then mirrored by S3, using the clapping icon in the participants’ window (PW, T2). The tutor reciprocates by using the clapping icon in T3. In turns 4 and 5, S4 praises the two students individually using the text chat and in the TL.

An aspect of the interaction shown in Extract 4 is the dynamic, self-perpetuating nature of SP (O/a theme 5; Sub-theme 5.2), which interview participants identified as conducive to group dynamics, and which is facilitated by multimodality. The tutor’s praise seems to generate further praise, which in itself develops cohesion between students and tutor in this part of the tutorial (evidenced by the responses of S3 and S4). In addition, the immediacy inherent in the use of the text chat and clapping icon fosters an instantaneous display of supportive communication, visible to all participants.

Turn	Actor	Audio	PW	Text chat	Translation
1	Tutor	BRAVISSIMI (0.5) complimenti a S1 and S2 ((laughs)) bravi bravi bravi			Very well-done (0.5) compliments to S1 and S2 ((laughs)) Well-done well-done well- done
2	S3		((clapping))		
3	Tutor		((clapping))		
4	S4			brava	
5	S4			bravo S2	

#### Extract 4

An observed aspect of TP was its impact on LLP and SP through a) support given to individuals with either technical problems or poor technical skills b) training in the use of the online tools. With respect to a), a common occurrence was microphone failure and the use of the text chat to compensate for this. The latter facilitated LLP for the individual student, but perhaps changed the nature of group cohesion, given that the tutor's attention (and that of other students) was necessarily diverted from language learning activity towards the individual, at least temporarily.

The following extract demonstrates the microphone failure of S1 and her tutor's attempts to help her. The lesson is interrupted as the tutor focusses on S1, using the audio tool first, and then the text chat to give S1 instructions. In fact S1 can hear her tutor but cannot speak (as is revealed by S1's 'no' in T4) but this is unclear to the tutor (a Spanish native speaker) who uses the microphone to talk, in part to herself and in part to S1 and the other students in the group (Ts 4 and 6), as she reveals her intention to switch modes to communicate with S1 in the chat (T6).


T	Actor	Audio	Text chat	Translation
1	Tutor	S1 (.) como estas? (1) hola (.) buenas noches		S1 (.) how are you (1) hello (.) good evening
2	Tutor	Hola S1 (.) puedes escucharme?		Hello S1 (.) can you hear me?
3			Hola S1 (.) me escuchas?	Hello S1 (.) can you hear me?
4	Tutor	No se si puede escuchar (3) S1(.) si quieres hablar (1) oh (.) no me escuchas		I don't know if she can hear (3) S1 (.) if you want to talk (1) oh (.) you can't hear me
5	S1		No	No
6	Tutor	Necessitas hacer el (2) ah (.) un momentito ((laughs)) no me escuchas (1) tengo que escribir en el chat (0.5) un momentito		You have to do the (2) ah (.) one moment ((laughs)) you can't hear me (1) I have to write in the chat (0.5) one moment
7	Tutor		S1 (.) please go to Tools and do the Audio Set up wizard to check your microphone and headphones	

### Extract 5

As this extract demonstrates, technical failures disrupt the flow of a session; however, the ability to mode switch facilitates their resolution. Lack of visual cues may have contributed to the tutor's confusion over the nature of the technical failure. In Extract 5, therefore, we can see both the disadvantages of working in *ElluminateLive* but also the advantage of being able to use different tools to communicate.

With respect to training in the use of the online tools, this was observed to take place in the first tutorial of a series. However, I also observed one example of training for SP in the data. Extract 6 demonstrates the TP category of management of the online environment and its impact on the SP affective dimension.

The tutor is encouraging learners to use smileys in the PW in order to acknowledge the contributions of other learners when they are disclosing personal information. This seemed to generate a climate in which learners freely used icons to praise or acknowledge other learners throughout the tutorial. Indeed, there was greater use of clapping and smileys in this tutorial than in any other I observed.

T	Actor	Audio	PW	Translation
1	Tutor	Can you press the happy face underneath your names? Just to show you can hear S1 (0.5) just right under the names (.) there is a happy face		
2	S2, S3, S4, S5			
3		Ah ha (.) muy bien muy bien gracias		Ah ha (.) very good very good thank you

**Extract 6**

### **6.3 Helpful and unhelpful SP (O/a theme 3)**

In this section, I focus on SP indicators in the affective and interactive dimensions, considered by interviewees to be problematic or to have problematic aspects. Not all aspects of SP were considered to be positive in nature or to have a positive impact on interaction. Other aspects (e.g. humour) were also considered to be potentially ambiguous.

### 6.3.1 Humour (Sub-theme 5.3.1)

SP, which could be broadly categorised as humour in the data seemed to be multifaceted as it performed a variety of discourse functions, according to the feelings and intentions of the communicator. This aspect of humour is further discussed in Chapter 7, section 7.3. In general, the projection of humour seemed to have a positive effect on interaction, as interviewees stated, and this positive impact seemed to be related to a lightening of atmosphere, reciprocity (humour generated further humour) and group cohesion (growing sense of community).

However, in the absence of body language cues, meanings were not always clear and I could therefore see why some interviewees felt wary about the projection of humour in their individual SP. Both the positive aspects of humorous interaction, and also the potential for misunderstanding, are demonstrated in Extracts 7 and 8.

In Extract 7, the tutor is asking her students how they feel about doing an activity. Her orientation towards the feelings of her students (T1) triggers their positive response, demonstrated in the use of the tick in T2. Her invitation to start the activity in English (T1) and then in Italian (T3) triggers S1's ironic response in which he communicates the feeling of (possible) reticence (T4). This is then followed by S2's smiley (T5) and the tutor's laughter (T6). The tutor's SP (T1) therefore appears to set in motion a sequence of humorous interaction which both breaks the ice and fosters cohesion. The multimodal nature of the interaction facilitates the instantaneous response by S1 to the tutor's question (T4) and S2's acknowledgement of this in the PW (T5).

T	Actor	Audio	Text chat	PW	Translation
1.	Tutor	How do you feel about it?			
2	S1,2,3,4			✓	
3	Tutor	(2) Che vuole iniziare (.) who wants to start?			(2) Who wants to start (.) who wants to start?
4.	S1		who's first lol		
5.	S2			😊	
6.	Tutor	(5) OK (.) let's do this (.) I'll start myself ((laughs))			

### Extract 7

In Extract 8, meanings are perhaps more open to interpretation. S1 has just completed a roleplay activity with another student and her posting in the text chat (T1) is interpreted as metaphorical by S2, as is indicated by his 'lol' (T2). The tutor also interprets T1 metaphorically and sees it as a joke (T3) but, in the absence of body language cues, she is unsure and checks her understanding with S1, i.e. S1's posting could also be interpreted literally.

Turn	Actor	Text chat	Audio
1	S1	gosh (.) it's warm in here!!	
2	S2	Lol	
3	T		((laughs)) It's warm in here ((laughs)) (1) do you get warm because of the effort of the dialogue?

### Extract 8

Most observed instances of humour were expressed through the text chat or the participants' window from learner to learner. This can perhaps be explained by the instantaneousness of these tools as opposed to the rigid turn-taking required in



the use of the microphone. I observed frequent use of emoticons to indicate that a comment was meant to be humorous, or to acknowledge the humour communicated by another learner in a previous turn. This was perhaps necessary in the absence of the wide range of non-verbal cues available face to face.

### 6.3.2 Self-disclosure (Sub-theme 5.3.3)

The interviewees valued self-disclosure as facilitative in online language learning as it fostered group cohesion and a comfortable learning environment. However, they also felt that self-disclosure needed to be appropriate. There seemed to be a hierarchy of intimacy generated by self-disclosure in the data, with greater intimacy associated with more personal information. For example, if the nature of self-disclosure in Extract 2 is compared with Extract 9 (below), there seems to be greater intimacy expressed in Extract 9. In this extract, S1 confesses to hating to hear her own voice. S2 agrees and there is a sense of shared experience and empathy, fostering cohesion between S1 and S2. However, intimate off-task self-disclosure (Extract 9) was not always appreciated by others present, according to the views of interviewees.

Turn	Actor	Text chat	Translation
1	S1	Eeuw, I hate to hear my own voice! :-!	
2	S2	anche io	Me too
3	S1	its horrible, even in English	

#### Extract 9

The text chat was commonly used for learner self-disclosure and, although this tool afforded the opportunity for private learner to learner communication, this affordance was used rarely in my observations. Self-disclosure via the text chat was therefore instantaneously relayed to the whole group and the immediate

visibility of its content could be perceived as distracting or inappropriate by some learners (O/a theme 3; Sub-theme 5.3.3 and O/a theme 6; Sub-theme 5.6.3).

Extract 10 demonstrates an example of self-disclosure which intercepts TP and LLP. The students have completed an activity in which they talked about how they were feeling. One student has used a new word, i.e. 'stanca'. Whilst interaction concerning the meaning of 'stanca' takes place in Ts 1, 4 and 6 between S2 and the tutor, the tutor is momentarily distracted by S1's self-disclosure that he is tired, too (T2) and responds to this with humour by self-disclosing that she is also a little tired (T3). S3 responds with a smiley to the interaction between S1 and the tutor (T5), whilst S2 replies to the tutor's original question (T4). In this extract, therefore, there is a parallel social exchange which intercepts tutor/learner interaction, facilitated by the affordances of the text chat and participants' window.

T	Actor	Audio	Text chat	PW	Translation
1	Tutor	Erm what is stanca? Anyone?			
2	S1		Anche io 😊		Me too 😊
3	Tutor	((laughs)) Anche io (.) po stanca (1) anche io un po (.) a little bit ((laughs))			((laughs)) me too (.) a bit tired (1) me too a bit (.) a little bit ((laughs))
4	S2	[	Tired		
5	S3			😊	
6	Tutor				OK (0.5) tired (0.5) that's correct

**Extract 10**

### **6.3.3 Dominating interaction (sub-theme 5.3.6)**

Dominating interaction was perceived by interview participants as a negative aspect of SP. However, whether or not the participation of others is perceived as 'dominating' is related to a subjective assessment of the behaviour of others, which may vary from learner to learner and from moment to moment.

In my observations, there was evidence of egalitarian participation when turn-taking was strictly controlled by the tutor for the purposes of completing an activity. Nevertheless, even then, messages were simultaneously posted in the text chat and some students clearly projected their SP to a greater extent than others. With respect to the microphone, its management by other learners or the tutor involved the employment of the hands-up facility to interrupt and was dependent upon the release of the microphone by the one holding the floor. Therefore, monopoly of the microphone was (potentially) facilitated by these technological limitations.

A possible example of dominating interaction using both the audio and text chat tools is illustrated in Extract 11. This interaction occurred when the tutor lost connectivity. The number of interactive turns of students S1 and S2 is disproportionate to that of the other two students in the tutorial (S3 and S4 ask one question each, using the audio and text chat tools respectively in Ts 19 and 22). Students S1 and S2 express their SP/LLP (communicating freely) via the target language and dominate the microphone. Owing to technical problems they then switch to the text chat. The unstructured, social nature of this part of the tutorial did not seem to have any positive effect for the two other learners present. Of course, it is possible that the language development of both S3 and S4 is positively affected by listening to S1 and S2.

T	Actor	Audio	Text chat	Translation
1	S1	S2 ?		S2?
2	S2	Vous avez dit quelque chose?		Did you say something?
3	S1	( )		
4	S2	je suis désolé (1) Je err je ne peux pas vous écouter		I'm sorry (1) I err I cannot hear you
5	S1	je voudrais demander (.) erm à quel pays vous habitez		I wanted to ask (.) erm at what country you live
6	S2	Qu'est-ce que vous avez demandé ?		What did you ask?
7	S1	( ) à quel pays (1) where are you from?		( ) at what country (1) where are you from?
8	S2	Je suis allemand		I'm German
9	S1	Pardon?		Sorry?
10	S2	Je suis ALLEMAND		I'm GERMAN
11	S1	Ah bon (.) ( )		Ah ok (.) ( )
12	S2	Pouvez-vous répéter votre question?		Can you repeat your question?
13	S1	( )		( )
14	S2	Err Je suis erm de la basse saxe		Err I'm erm from Lower Saxony
15	S1	( )		( )
16	S2	De la BASSE SAXE (1) from lower Saxony		From LOWER SAXONY (1) from lower Saxony
17	S1	(1) Ah bon		(1) Ah ok
18	S2	Hello (1) I'm from lower SAXONY		Hello (1) I'm from lower SAXONY
19	S3	(1) Qu'est-ce que c'est le nom de la ville?		(1) What's the name of the town?
20	S1	( )		( )
21	S2		S1, je suis de la basse-saxe (I'm from lower Saxony)	S1, I'm from lower Saxony (I'm from lower Saxony)
22	S4		bassa sassonia?	Lower Saxony?
23	S2		Oui, S1 (Je crois c'est italien?)	Yes, S1 (I think it is Italian?)
24	S1		Mois, je habite en Hessen	Me, I live in Hessen
25	S2		Ah, une compatriote!!	Ah, a fellow countryman!!
26	S1		mais je suis de les etats uni	I'm from the United States
27	S2		I see	I see
28	S1		presque, je habite la seulemont, et je parle l'allemande plus bein a le Francé	almost, I only live there, and I speak German more better to the French

**Extract 11**

### 6.3.4 Silence (Sub-theme 5.3.7)

For the interviewees, the silence of other learners was construed negatively in terms of its impact on interaction. In my observations, tutorial participants were sometimes silent. Observable reasons were difficulties with the session content (see Extract 1) and also technical difficulties (Extract 5). However, I also noticed silence due to possible non-engagement with the session content.

In the following extract, S2 has been silent but has not used the ‘away’ function to signify absence. S1 asks if S2 is still present. S2 responds that she is there, but in her kitchen. Silence in this example, therefore, appears to be related to potential non-engagement with the session content (although it is also possible that the student was multitasking).

T	Actor	Audio	Translation
1	S1	S2 (1) vous êtes déjà là aussi?	S2 (1) are you already there?
2	S2	Je suis encore là et à la cuisine	I’m still there and in my kitchen

**Extract 12**

The ‘away’ function may signify physical absence or non-engagement. Lack of use of the ‘away’ button does not necessarily mean either physical presence or engagement. The semiotic meaning of this online tool to signify temporary absence is not necessarily realised in its actual use/lack of use. In general, the absence of visual cues problematizes the experience of silence for both learners and tutor as the nature and function of silence can be less easily ascertained than in a face to face environment.

## **6.4 The impact of individual differences (O/a Theme 4)**

Interviewees showed awareness of individual differences, their impact on the development of SP and on the ways in which it was projected. In the observation data, I was able to observe some examples of the individual differences of both tutors and students.

### **6.4.1 Confidence and willingness to communicate (related to Sub-theme 5.4.2)**

There were examples in which higher level students were able to project their SP through discursive activities and practise the TL to a greater extent than their less advanced colleagues (for example, the interaction shown in Extract 21, later in this chapter). However, paradoxically, I also noticed that some students, driven by an apparent need to communicate, were sometimes more socially present than seemingly more able colleagues. This corroborated learner perceptions that confidence, which does not correlate with linguistic ability, and willingness to communicate were significant factors in the projection of SP, irrespective of level.

Extract 13 demonstrates the extension of an activity by a student through her SP (interactive dimension, communicating freely). The students are practising questions/answers about daily routines. In this extract, S2 extends the activity by adding personal information whilst her colleague (S1) listens. A feature of the interaction in this extract is also code-switching (German-English T2; English to German, T4), which seems to function to maintain the flow of the conversation. In T2, S2 is asking for clarification from her partner so she can continue the dialogue. In T5, the tutor tries to facilitate by asking S2 a question. S2's drive to communicate results in her German becoming incomprehensible in T6 and it is

unlikely that S1 benefitted from the interaction linguistically. In addition, S2's monopoly of the audio in T6 (one minute, 58 seconds) meant that neither S1 nor the tutor were able to interrupt her.

T	Actor	Audio	Translation
1	S1	S2 (0.5) wann lernst du Deutsch?	S2 (0.5) when do you learn German?
2	S2	(1) Err ja err ich glaube dat err ich ver versteh dat err (1) your question is when did err when did err did I begin to learn the German? Is it (.) right?	(1) Err I err I think dat err I un under dat err (1) your question is when did err when did err did I begin to learn the German? Is it (.) right?
3	S1	Err (.) I meant when in the day do you learn German?	Err (.) I meant when in the day do you learn German?
4	S2	Ja err entschuldigung (0.5) my my my MY computer funktioniert nicht sehr gut (.) err ja (.) err ich lerne Deutsche err wann ich kann (1) aber ich err err ich err folge der der deutsche Serie (.) police Ser Serie (3)	Yes err sorry (0.5) my my my MY computer doesn't work very well (.) err yes (.) err I learn Geman err when I can (1) but I err err I err follow the the German series (.) police Ser series (3)
5	Tutor	Genau ich glaube du siehst ( ) oder ( )?	Exactly I think you watch ( ) is that right ( )?
6	S2	Nein Gerichte nicht mehr err weil err weil err (.) ja ( ) ich arbeite mit ( ) nicht mehr Gericht err (.) eins (.) zwei ( ) oder Leipzig oder ( )	No no longer courts err because err because err (.) yes ( ) I work with ( ) no more court err (.) one (.) two ( ) or Leipzig or ( )

**Extract 13**

### 6.4.2 Emotional responses and attitudes (sub-theme 5.4.2)

Differences relating to emotional responses were difficult to observe without access to learner perceptions. However, one example is illustrated in Extract 14. S2 leaves the tutorial abruptly, citing exhaustion as her reason for doing this. Her tutor's response is empathic. This is an example of SP in the affective dimension and its indicator of negative feelings. I wondered if the physical location of the

computer in the student's home facilitated her early departure, given that she could perhaps more easily make her exit and disconnect than in a comparable situation in a face to face language classroom. Therefore, the convenience aspect of tutorials (participating online and from home) could also facilitate premature departure with a concomitant negative impact on LLP.

<b>T</b>	<b>Actor</b>	<b>Audio</b>	<b>Ticks/Crosses</b>
1	Tutor	Do you have any questions at all (.) about that?	
2	S1		x
3	S2	No questions but I'm sorry (0.5) I'm just SO exhausted (.) I'm going to HAVE to stop (.) I'm I'm REALLY sorry it's just been (1) today has been too much	
4	Tutor	Yes I can fully understand (0.5) I mean it's (.) after a long day at work and then shopping and then coming home and going full-blown into German (.) I DO understand	

**Extract 14**

### **6.4.3 Individual characteristics of tutors (related to Sub-theme 5.4.1)**

TSP varied in the data, according to the way the tutor communicated. A sub-theme identified from the interviewees was the valuing of acknowledgement of the presence of others and also of the tutor's warmth (O/a theme 3; sub-theme 5.3.4 and O/a theme 2; Sub-theme 5.2.1). Examples are shown in Extracts 15 and 16. In Extract 15, the tutor uses cohesive and inclusive language (i.e. the use of vocatives and asking students' opinions) to encourage her students to participate in an activity. In Extract 16, the students have just completed the activity and she praises them warmly.



A noticeable feature of the interaction in Extract 15, is also the switching between TP and TSP, as the tutor's communication shifts between giving instructions to building inclusive relationships. Based on interview data, a function of TSP is to enhance TP and one way in which tutors might do this was observed in the data as switching between TP and TSP within or across turns. In addition, the degree of SP demonstrated in Extract 16 (i.e. lavish praise and building cohesion) perhaps gave this tutor's SP an explicit quality, seen as important by interview participants.

T	Actor	Audio
1	Tutor	va bene (1) erm what I suggest now is to work in pairs with very short dialogues (.) for instance S1 and S2 can say hello (.) what is your name (.) my name is (.) how are you (.) I'm fine thanks (.) and you? (1) <b>how do you feel about this?(.)</b> doing very short dialogues between (.) for instance S1 and S2 and then S3 and S4 (.) <b>how do you feel about it (.)</b> saying your name and how are you

**Extract 15**

T	Actor	Audio	PW	Translation
1	Tutor	BRAVISSIMI (1) bravi S1 and S2 and S3 and S4 (.) molto bravi		Very well-done (1) well-done S1 and S2 and S3 and S4 (.) very well-done

**Extract 16**

In Extract 16, feedback given by the tutor is oriented towards SP. In comparison, the tutor's feedback in Extract 17 (below) is oriented towards the projection of TP. Extract 17 is taken from a tutorial in which the tutor lost connectivity. Prior to the technical failure, students are taking it in turns to describe a series of un-related objects on a whiteboard. The activity is highly structured and controlled, both in its nature, i.e. using adjectives to describe objects, and also in the tutor's attempts to limit the language used by students in the activity to one or two adjectives (T5). Notably, there is no supportive SP in this extract from the tutor.

T	Actor	Audio	Translation
1	Tutor	Oui d'accord (0.5) donc (.) c'est une petite poupée erm (0.5) qu'est-ce qu'on pourrait ajouter encore (1) on peut parler de la couleur (0.5) qu' est-ce qu'on pourrait dire?	Yes ok (0.5) then (.) it's a little doll erm (0.5) what can we still add (1) we can talk about its colour (0.5) what could we say?
2	S1	C'est toujours à moi (.) oui?	It's still my turn (.) yes?
3	Tutor	Oui	Yes
4	S1	Par exemple (.) la poupée (.) elle est assise sur une table err c'est un ( ) foncé ( ) et la poupée (.) elle a un chapeau blanc avec des petits points rouges (.) les cheveux rouges (.) une robe rouge blanche (.) et elle porte des bottes et des chaussettes blanches	For example (.) The doll (.) she is sitting on a table err it's a ( ) dark ( ) and the doll (.) she's got a white hat with little red spots (.) red hair (.) a red and white dress (.) and she's wearing boots and white socks
5	Tutor	D'accord (1) ok (.) donc beaucoup de détails (1) vous ne devez pas donner autant de détails (0.5) mais donner un ou deux adjectifs pour décrire l'objet (.) d'accord?	Right (1) ok (.) well a lot of detail (1) you shouldn't give so many details (0.5) but give one or two adjectives to describe the object (.) ok?

### Extract 17

The difference in communication between tutor A (Extracts 15 and 16) and tutor B (Extract 17) seemed to have an impact on interaction in their text chats. Communication in the text chat of Tutor A reflected the socially-oriented communication style of the tutor. In total, there were 137 student postings in this text chat and around 60% of these projected SP or a combination of SP/LLP.

By contrast, Extract 18 reflects the totality of text chat content in 19 minutes 19 seconds of tutor B's tutorial prior to the tutor's loss of connection. Each posting by the tutor is in response to language activity (describing objects) which is taking place via the audio tool (not shown here as the focus is text chat activity). Student postings (S1 and S2) are limited to disclosure about problems with technology.

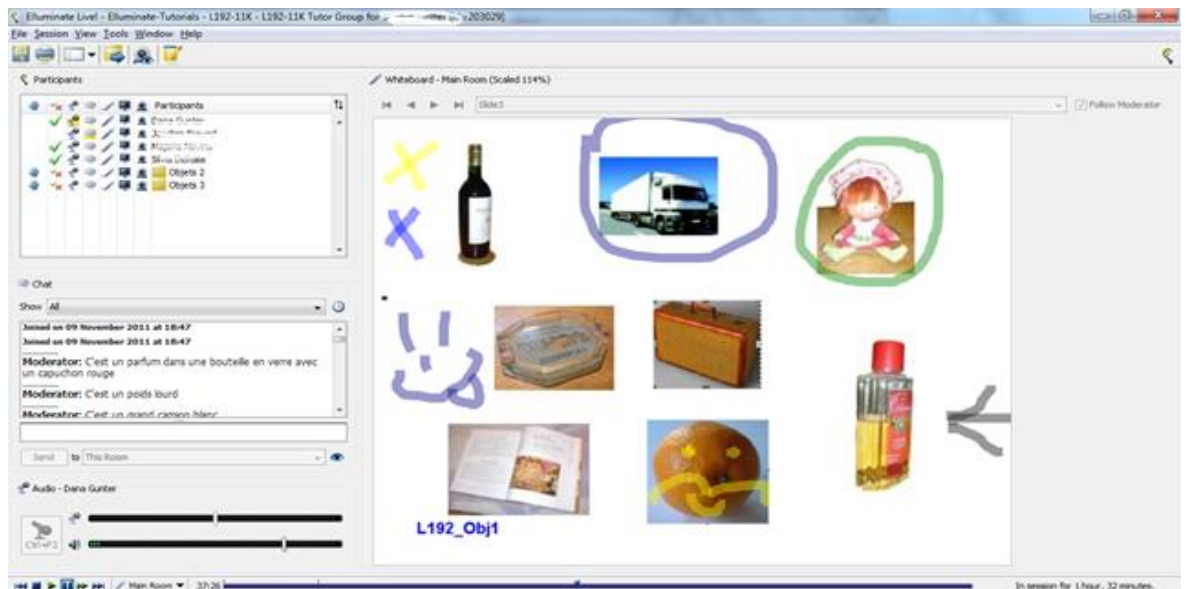
Actor	Text chat	Translation
Tutor	C'est un parfum dans une bouteille en verre avec un capuchon rouge	It's a perfume in a glass bottle with a red top
Tutor	C'est un poids lourd	It's a lorry
Tutor	C'est un grand camion blanc	It's a big white lorry
S1	Je ne vous entend pas	I can't hear
S2	Desolee, mais je n'entendez pas	Sorry but I can't hear

#### Extract 18

The following extract (Extract 19), is taken from tutor B's tutorial and shows the interaction immediately subsequent to that in Extract 17. In Extract 19, the tutor has just lost connectivity and the student to student interaction suddenly becomes more social. The students interact openly in the TL, unconstrained by the structure previously imposed by the activity. There is a sense of cohesion, signalled by the fluid interaction between Ss1, 2 and 3, the use of humour and statement by S3 (T3) that it is now recreation. The act of defacing the whiteboard images, shown in Figure 29 (below) could be interpreted as a tension release. It would seem that the nature of the activity shown in Extract 17 had a constraining effect on the projection of SP; equally, perhaps, the tutor's lack of SP was constraining.

T	Actor	TC	WB	Translation
1.	S1	Nous avons perdu notre professeur!		We've lost our teacher!
2.	S2	mince!		Damn!
3.	S3	c'est la recreation		It's fun time
4.	S2	:- D oui! et on fait les betise		:- Yes! and we're being silly
5	S2		((Draws a face on the whiteboard))	
6	S2	regard!		look!
7	S3		((Draws a face on one of the objects displayed on the whiteboard))	

#### Extract 19



**Figure 29** The *ElluminateLive* whiteboard following the departure of the tutor

## **6.5 The dynamic, varying nature of SP (O/a theme 5)**

The dynamic interconnectedness of the three presences and of the categories of SP have been illustrated in this chapter. For example, in terms of the self-perpetuating nature of SP, I have demonstrated that SP is modelled by the tutor (Extract 4 ) and mimicked by students in response to tutor SP or as a response to LSP (Extracts 1 and 4). I have also shown that SP varies in the case of individual learners (Extract 1) and may vary according to the way individual learners communicate (i.e. some learners are naturally more socially present than others, Extract 13). It also develops in relation to language level and the nature of communicative interaction at more advanced levels where there is more scope for social interaction (Extracts 2 and 3). In this section, I focus on what I observed about the impact of collaborative interaction on SP.

## **6.5.1 Task-based interaction in groups (related to Sub-theme**

### **5.5.3)**

Task-based interaction was observed to foster group cohesion in the data. Whether or not an activity was meaning-focussed or form-focussed, I noticed that if students collaborated to complete tasks, their interactions became more socially-oriented with a concomitant increase in group cohesion. In the online environment, the whiteboard was commonly used as a stimulus for task-based interaction as is shown in Figure 30 (below).

In Extract 20, the task was to work collaboratively as a group to reorder the sentences on the white board (Figure 30). S1, S2 and S3 are working on a task together. This is to reorder sentence 2, shown in Figure 30. The interaction demonstrates a mix of SP (Ts 1, 3, 5, 9, 10) and LLP (Ts 1, 2, 4, 5, 7). However, the act of collaboration, itself, seems to foster group cohesion as students work towards a common goal. In addition, the tutor is able to give feedback unobtrusively through the use of the emoticons (Ts 6 and 8), which demonstrate a mingling of TSP and TP and flash in the participants' window whilst the students are working.

A theme from the interviews was that some tasks generated more SP than others. However, as is demonstrated by Extract 20, even though a task might be grammar-focussed, the act of collaboration may also generate SP.

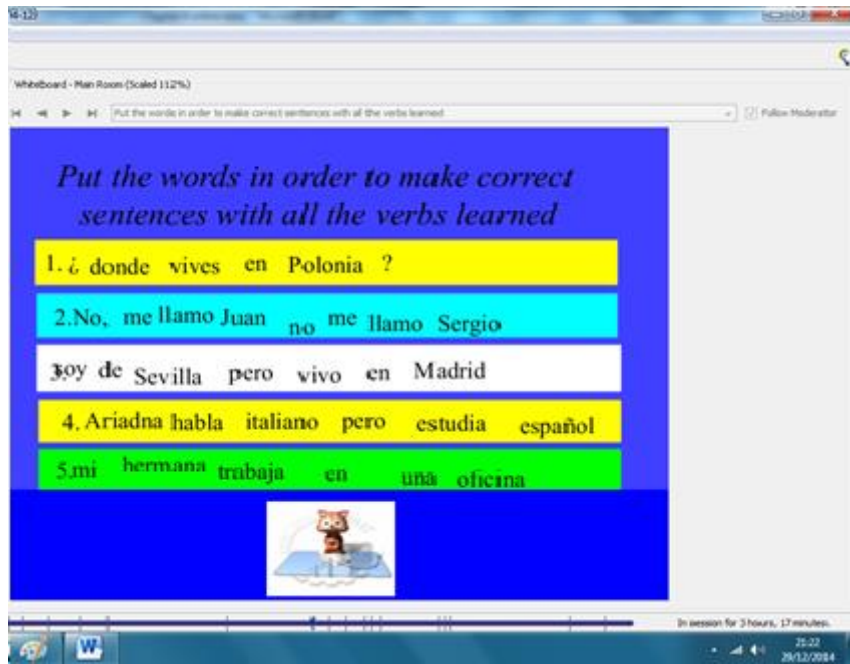


Figure 30: Collaborative interaction

T	Actor	Audio	PW	Translation
1	S1	((struggling with the task)) So I was gonna say (0.5) do we have to start with the capitals? (2) I dunno (.) ((laughs)) now I'm confused so ((laughs))		
2	S2	What about		
3	S1	Please sort it out		
4	S2	What about (0.5) no me llamo no Juan (.) me llamo Sergio?		What about (0.5) I'm not not called Juan (.) I'm called Sergio?
5	S1	No me llamo no Juan I dunno what that		I'm not not called Juan I dunno what that ...
6	Tutor		☹	
7	S3	Wouldn't it be (.) no me (.) no me llamo? As in no I am not?		Wouldn't it be (.) I'm not (.) I'm not called? As in no I am not?
8	Tutor		☺ ((clapping))	
9	S1	I don't know (1) I'm confused (.) so		
10	S3	We'll take guesses		

#### Extract 20

### 6.5.2 Task-based interaction in pairs (related to Sub-theme 5.5.3)

In Extract 21, S1 and S2 are collaborating during a pair work activity, involving the exchange of personal information and the primary purpose is LLP. The nature of the interaction is socially-oriented and both students communicate openly. S1 is at a higher level of competence than S2. S2 struggles to respond in Spanish and asks S1 to help her (T4). S1 then facilitates the interaction via his TP (Ts 5 & 7) and helps S2 to communicate in the TL (T8). The positive impact on S2's speaking skills is also shown in her willingness to communicate (Ts 6 and 8).

This extract demonstrates a mingling of both SP and LLP and also a presence switch between SP/LLP (Ts 1, 2, 3) to LLP in Ts 4 and 6 for S2. S1 also switches presence to TP (Ts 5 and 7) from SP/LLP, thereby demonstrating that TP is not limited to the tutor. The switching of presences and collaboration between S1 and S2 facilitates learning for S1 (Ts 6 and 8).

This extract took place in the plenary, which functioned as a 'break-out' room as the tutor needed extra space for pairwork (all other participants were in designated break-out rooms). The two students in this extract were therefore alone. Break-out rooms are a facility of *ElluminateLive*, in which learners can work together, unobserved by other students (and potentially the tutor) in the tutorial. This online tool may therefore facilitate the projection of online presence a) because it affords some privacy and interviewees disliked being put on the spot (O/a theme 2; Sub-theme 5.2.1) and b) because it allows for interaction between pairs or small groups of learners as opposed to whole group plenary interaction in which one learner may wait their turn to speak for several minutes.



T	Actor	Audio	Translation
1	S1	yo no tengo hijos o hijas (.) y tu ? (2) tienes hijos ou hijas?	I don't have any sons or daughters (.) and you? (2) do you have sons or daughters?
2	S2	err(.) tengo (1) dos hijas	Err (.) I have (1) two daughters
3	S1	dos hijas (.) quantos anos tienen?	Two daughters (.) how old are they?
4	S2	La major (1) is that the right word? major err	The older one (1) is that the right word? older err
5	S1	Major ((corrects pronunciation))	Older ((corrects pronunciation))
6	S2	La major ((correct pronunciation)) tiene veinte un anos y err le el Oh God (.) I can't remember the name for small	The older one ((correct pronunciation)) is twenty and err the he Oh God (.) I can't remember the name for small
7	S1	Pequeno	Little one
8	S2	Pequeno ((laughs)) mi hijo pequeno tiene onze anos	Little one Pequeno ((laughs)) my young son is eleven
9	S1	Onze? Ah vale	Eleven? Ah ok

#### Extract 21

## 6.6 The impact of *ElluminateLive* (O/a theme 6)

Throughout this chapter I have demonstrated the impact of the multimodal environment on SP. This was an over-arching theme identified in the interviews and it is *through* and *in* the online medium that SP is communicated. The management of technology was observed to influence the projection of all three SP dimensions, although each of these dimensions was observed to generate further SP both within the same dimension but in other dimensions (e.g. affective SP generated further affective SP but also seemed to impact on interactive and cohesive SP). However, the use of online resources to project SP was also contingent upon their affordances. In this section, I summarise the ways I observed the tools being used and also their communicative potential and limitations.

The ability of individual learners to manage technology, aside from technical failures, was observed to vary. For example, learners would forget to switch off their microphones to allow others to speak, have difficulty with audio settings or struggle with the use of whiteboard tools. Demands on the tutor to manage the lesson content as well as aspects of technology were therefore considerable, as the interviewees also acknowledged. In approximately eighty per cent of the tutorials I observed, there was a technical problem to be managed. An example is given in this chapter in Extract 5.

Tools used to project SP were primarily the icons (emoticons, clapping icon), the text chat and the microphone. Icons were also used as an alternative to discourse functions which would be performed through spoken and/or written modes in face to face contexts.

Ticks and crosses were used to establish presence (TP, SP and LLP), at the beginning of tutorials when tutors performed sound checks to ensure that students could hear each other. Following this, the main use of ticks and crosses was to signal agreement or disagreement in response to questions from tutors. However, there were examples of more socially-oriented uses of ticks and crosses (Extract 7).

With respect to the affordances of the emoticons, these were found to a) perform a variety of discourse functions b) be polarised in terms of the emotions communicated (i.e. either positive or negative). In terms of the latter, I am aware that this aspect was disliked by interview participants, leading to a reticence to use them (O/a Theme 6; Sub-theme 6.3). Examples, of different discourse functions

from this chapter are praise (Extract 20), sharing a joke (Extract 7), showing happy feelings (Extract 1), giving feedback (Extract 20). Emoticons could be used to reinforce feelings (Extract 10) and within different tools (i.e. audio plus participants' window; text chat to reinforce text with icon) or to represent them when used alone. In the latter case, they were sometimes open to misinterpretation or to multiple interpretations. For example the use of the frowny face in Extract 20 could have signalled the inaccuracy of the students' work or that the tutor was unhappy with it, or both.

What I also found was that emoticons and the clapping icon seemed to have a positive impact on further communication of SP, fostering open communication and group cohesion. When used in the participants' window, the flashing appearance of icons amplified their presence which may have contributed to mirroring by other participants. Sometimes, emoticons were used in conjunction with the clapping icon to reinforce positive affect (Extract 20).

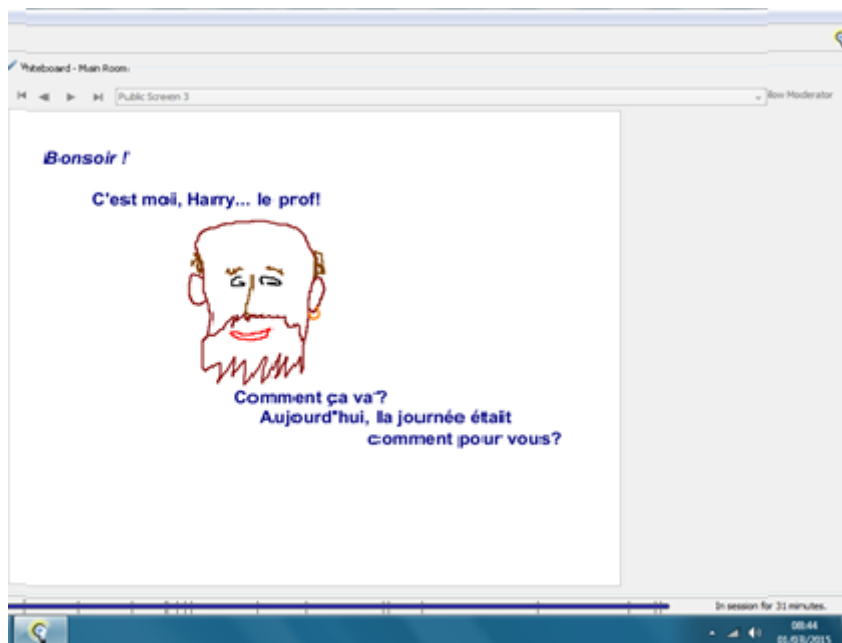
The use of negative icons (frowny faces, thumbs down) was less frequent than smileys or the clapping icon. In fact, I observed two examples of the use of 'thumbs down' by the tutor but, in both cases they were used to show empathy with a student who was struggling with technical issues.

The text chat seemed to be the least controlled function with the greatest scope for written and iconic expression within the medium. The extent to which it was used for the projection of SP, however, seemed to depend on the pivotal role of the tutor in establishing a climate through both TP and SP, in which open communication was fostered (as was demonstrated in Section 6.4.3 of this chapter). The text chat

was the locus of multiple manifestations of social presence. These included but were not limited to:

- i) interactions in the target language (Extract 11)
- ii) affective responses to the lesson content or to the interaction, in general (Extract 1)
- iii) self-disclosure (Extract 9)
- iv) discussion/comment unrelated to the lesson content (Extract 9)
- v) supportive comments made between learners. (Extract 1)
- vi) humour (Extract 7)

The whiteboard was primarily used to project TP, but it was also used to project TSP through self-disclosure at the start of a series of tutorials. One way in which this was achieved was via welcoming or potentially entertaining pictures on the white board, as is illustrated in Figure 31.



**Figure 31: A welcoming whiteboard**

With respect to microphone use, the fact that learners had to click on and off in order to speak detracted from the spontaneity of speaking and interviewees

disliked what one participant referred to as its 'clunky' aspect (O/a theme 6; sub-theme 5.6.3). However, a key functionality of the microphone was the simultaneous speaker setting which allowed several people to speak at the same time. Unfortunately, this function was not well-adapted to large group interaction due to technical failures.

Finally, as discussed with respect to Extract 21, the facility to create break-out rooms may be conducive to the projection of SP. This aspect was not highlighted in participant narratives, and the observation of break-out room interaction was not possible via recorded tutorials. The example shown in Extract 21 used the plenary as break-out room, whilst other participants were sent to actual break-out rooms; hence my ability to observe it. The impact of break-out rooms on the projection and development of SP could be explored through further research.

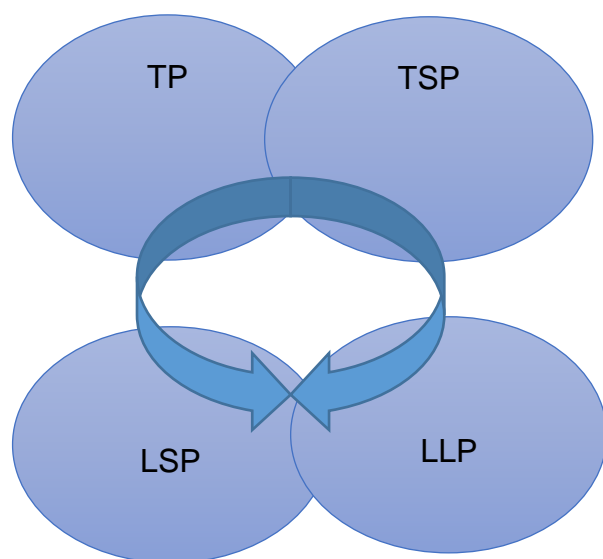
## **6.7 Summary**

The findings of this Chapter illustrate how SP may be both projected and generated within and through the online environment. They demonstrate the multiple, complex functions of SP in online discourse. They also triangulate and extend the interview data by demonstrating the ways in which TP, LLP and SP interact and are mediated by learner and tutor interaction and by the online tools and resources. Table 22 summarises findings from my analysis of tutorial observations, which build on learner perceptions by providing further insight into the nature and function of SP in *IlluminateLive*. This table relates the findings to examples from extracts discussed in this chapter.

Findings		Extracts
1.	SP indicators in one dimension may generate SP in other dimensions (i.e. humour may generate group cohesion and interaction)	7
2.	SP indicators within the same dimension may generate SP within that dimension (self-disclosure may foster self-disclosure)	9
3.	SP may be communicated through written, spoken, visual and iconic modes or through more than one mode simultaneously	10
4.	Interaction may be identified as expressing more than one presence simultaneously	2, 3 (and throughout Chapter 6)
5.	LLP and LSP are contingent upon or strongly influenced by TP (including the selection and facilitation of tasks and activities and management of the online learning environment)	5, 6, 17, 18
6.	SP may have an infectious or contagious quality	1, 7
7.	LSP may generate LSP	1, 8, 10
8.	TSP may generate LSP and LLP	1, 4, 15 and 16
9.	High degrees of explicit TSP may impact directly on LSP	15, 16
10.	The tools of the environment can be used to communicate various discourse functions, sometimes simultaneously	1, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 20
11.	Collaborative interaction may foster both LSP and LLP, irrespective of whether a task is meaning or form-focussed	20, 21
12.	Projected aspects of SP may have a negative impact on other learners but not, necessarily, for the individual learner (s)	11, 13, 14

**Table 22: Findings from online observations**

Finally, to return to my adapted version of the Col framework presented in Chapter 2 of this thesis, a more accurate representation of the interaction between TP, TSP, LSP and LLP needs to demonstrate both the overlapping and interactive nature of the presences. This is shown in Figure 32. The overlapping area LSP and LLP indicates interaction observed in the data which can be described as *both* LSP and LLP (e.g. Extract 19). The overlap TP and TSP indicates interaction which is both TP and TSP (e.g. Extracts 2 and 3). The arrows indicate movement between TSP/TP and LSP/TP showing the primary role of TSP and TP.



**Figure 32: A model of interaction for audigraphic, synchronous online language learning contexts**

# Chapter 7: Discussion

## Introduction

I set out to explore the nature and role of SP in an audiographic synchronous online language learning environment using an adapted version of the Col framework. This framework provided a useful theoretical backcloth for the exploration of learner perceptions of the impact of SP on language learning and also a methodological tool for the analysis of the impact of SP within online tutorials.

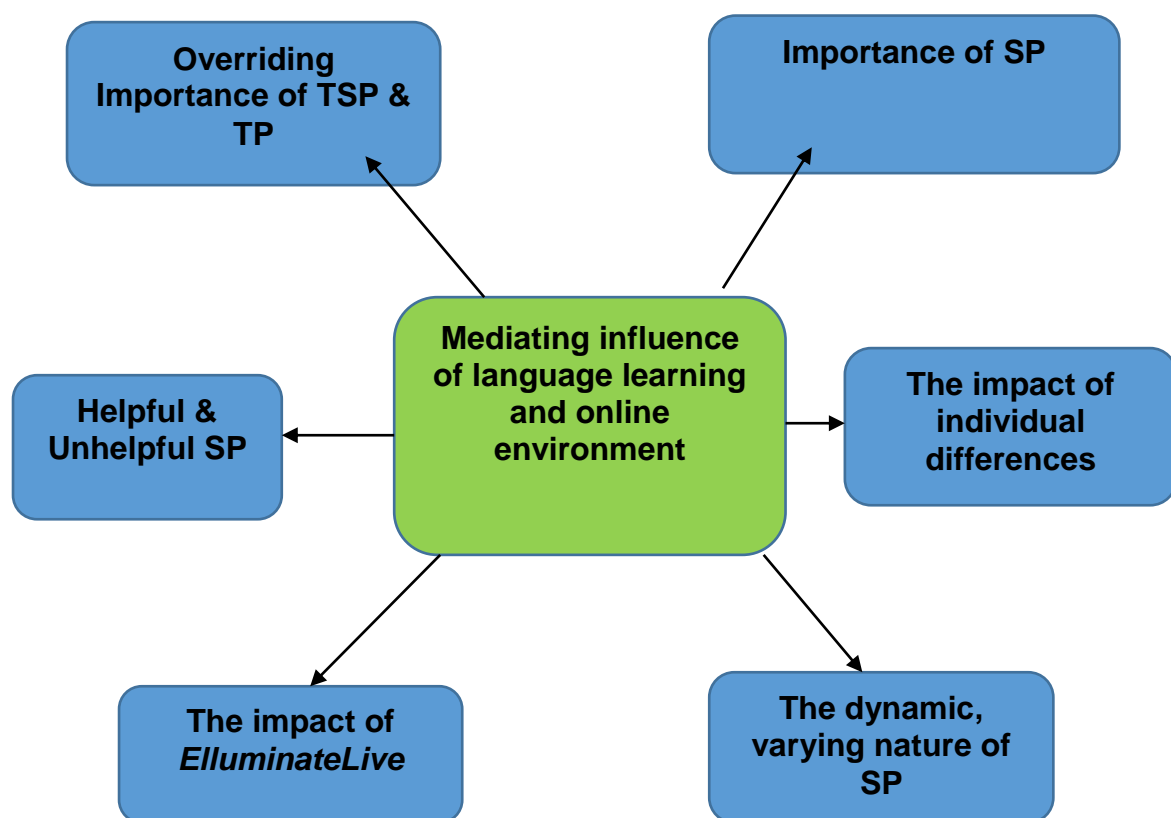
The original Col framework posited a mediating role for SP between TP and CP. Subsequent studies have variously identified the different relevance and importance of each of the three presences, relative to each other and in a range of (mostly) asynchronous contexts (Swan and Ice, 2010). My research data established an important role for an online Col, specific to language learning across different levels and languages. Along with Arbaugh et al. (2010), I contend that subject matter is an important mediating variable when analysing the role of SP in language learning. Also my findings need to be viewed as relevant to multimodal, language learning contexts in that they are rooted in these socio-cultural environments. Therefore the specific nature of the multimodal environment is an equally important mediating variable.

In addition, as argued in Chapter 2, the Col framework with its constructivist, process-orientation, is suitably applied to synchronous contexts, where interaction occurs on a moment by moment basis (Lee, 2014). However, it was necessary to modify the original Col framework in order to make it relevant to the context of my study. I did this by a) redefining SP and TP b) modifying both the SP and TP



categories and indicators c) identifying the categories and indicators of the new 'LLP'. The data identified through the use of this framework yielded insights into the nature and role of online SP. It also highlighted some inherent problems with this framework in terms of its categorisation of indicators of the three presences.

In this chapter, I discuss my main research findings in relation to the literature on SP. The chapter is organised according to the overarching themes derived from questionnaires and interviews. Figure 33 (below) provides a diagrammatic overview of the chapter. It is similar to Figure 28 in that it shows six main overarching themes in relation to the mediating variables of subject area and online context. However, it does not duplicate the sub-themes discussed in Chapter 5. This is because additional findings gained from tutorial observations are also discussed in this chapter in relation to their relevance to each overarching theme. Each sub-section of this chapter is mapped to my original research questions.



**Figure 33: Overarching themes mediated by subject area and online context**

## **7.1 The importance of SP for LLP (RQ 1)**

For the learners in my study, the fact that they found SP facilitative of online language learning seemed to be related to feeling comfortable and to the alleviation of anxiety. There is ample research evidence to support the important negative impact of anxiety in SLA (Sheen, 2008) and, specifically, in online environments (de los Arcos et al., 2009; Satar and Ozdener 2008; Hampel et al., 2005). Anxiety impacts on open communication and on group dynamics. Open communication including risk-taking, hypothesis-testing and practice of language structures is essential for language learning, according to SLA theory (Ellis, 2008). In addition, as discussed in Chapter 2, affect also impinges on cognition and where affect is negative, learning may be negatively influenced (Brown & White, 2010).

An intrinsic connection between SP and language learning for some learners was evidenced in a conflation between communication in the TL and SP in the data. Interviewees talked about SP as a necessary component of TL communication, i.e. that TL communicative interaction would necessarily involve SP and that this was both essential for language learning and was what distinguished language learning from other subject areas.

In the Col framework, one of the indicators of the interactive category is communicating freely with other participants. Within a sociocultural SLA theoretical framework, language learning necessarily includes communicative interaction in the TL involving collaboration with others (Meskill, 2013). Therefore, TL open communication and the projection of (interactive) SP may be perceived as being one and the same.

This conflation between SP and LLP was also evident in the tutorial observations. In order to analyse the impact of SP on LLP, I had attempted to distinguish between presences, based on the purpose of communication. However, I found that it was impossible to determine this purpose in some instances of target language use (i.e. either LLP or SP) as both presences seemed to merge. Social interaction in the TL was both the means and the end of some language learning activities and the transition towards higher degrees of SP, projected through TL interaction, was necessarily demonstrated as language competence developed. This aspect also reflected the overlapping nature of online presence depicted in the original Col framework.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the role of SP in online learning has been variously construed in relation to its impact on CP (Annand, 2011). When CP is replaced by LLP, it is clear that SP plays an essential role, not only in mediating LLP by establishing the social and affective conditions to promote it, but also because SP is rooted in instances of social interaction in the TL. This is what both differentiates language learning from learning other subjects online and also, perhaps, elevates the importance of SP in online language learning.

## **7.2 The overriding importance of TSP and TP (RQ 1.3)**

In research studies, TSP is not usually viewed as a separate construct from TP although Garrison et al. (2000, p.5) refer to teacher 'immediacy' behaviours which reduce psychological distance between tutor and learners. In some studies of TP, aspects which I have identified as TSP, i.e. praise and encouragement have also been encompassed within TP (Lowenthal, & Parscal, 2008).

In synchronous online language learning contexts, in which it could be argued that the tutor takes a more distinctive role from learners than in asynchronous contexts, I see the lack of differentiation in the literature between TP and TSP as problematic from a methodological perspective, i.e. the conflation of these presences does not allow for the identification of the more socially oriented aspects of tutor communication and their impact on language learning, nor of those social aspects of tutor communication which may be differentiated from LSP. With respect to the latter, Swan and Shih (2005, p.129), argued that TSP needed to be viewed as a separate construct from LSP, given that TSP and LSP 'differentially influence other student perceptions'.

Learners regarded both TP and TSP as more important than LSP. The role of the tutor was seen as vital and this is reflected in studies which focus on learner expectations of the tutor's skills online, i.e. Murphy (2015) and also on the comparative importance of TP over SP (Wisneski et al., 2015; Diaz et al., 2010). Diaz et al. (2010, p.102) argue that students may value TP over SP 'because they correctly view teaching presence as a necessary condition for the development of social presence'. Indeed, and in line with TP of the Col framework, an essential aspect of TP was observed to be the management of the online environment and learners' By supporting learners in the use of the tools, tutors established the conditions within which both SP and LLP could manifest. Therefore, my research supports that of Diaz et al. (2010) in this aspect.

Aspects of TSP were also prioritised over LSP in the narratives of interviewees. Tutor affective support (praise, warmth and sensitivity) and appropriate self-disclosure established a climate within which learners felt more comfortable and less anxious, when working online. These findings corroborate those of Rosell-Aguilar (2007), discussed in Chapter 2. Additionally, my tutorial observations illustrated that TSP indicators were mimicked by learners. TSP, therefore, was perceived to play an important role in generating LSP. It could be argued, therefore, that TSP provides a necessary condition for LSP.

Whereas aspects of TSP were found in my study to have a causative effect on the generation of further projection of LSP, the analysis of observation data also showed a juxtaposition of presences in communicative interaction, i.e. there were examples of TSP *and* TP in one interactive turn, and equally of LLP *and* SP. In terms of the multiple and complex functions of discourse, this is, of course, as

would be expected. However, there seems to be a general gap in the Col literature regarding the interplay of presences as part of the same interactive turn, given that Col researchers tend to focus on the identification and function of three distinct presences.

In addition, and as for LSP and LLP discussed in the previous section, there were examples of a merger of TSP and TP, i.e. tutor social interaction in the target language which clearly and simultaneously demonstrated TP through the manipulation of language structures. There was also a notion expressed by interviewees that TSP might function in conjunction with TP to enhance TP. Examples given by interviewees in relation to dynamism suggest that through TSP, TP may become more salient, with a concomitant positive impact on LLP. Learners also suggested that TSP needed to be more explicit in the online environment and there were examples in the observation data of high degrees of SP projected by some tutors and their impact on interaction.

It is possible that the role of TSP is not restricted to the development of an affective learning climate but that TSP, through enhancing TP, may also impact more directly on SLA by making language learning content more salient. Perhaps through impacting upon internalisation, TSP is another example of how affect impinges upon learning and memory (Hurd, 2008). This is a complex area worthy of further research.

### **7.3 Helpful and unhelpful SP (RQ 1.1, 1.2, 1.3)**

Not all aspects of SP were perceived as helpful by research participants and this finding has, to date, received scant attention in the published literature on SP.

Logically, given that SP has been defined in this thesis as ‘interaction with others for social and/or affective purposes’, it could be argued that in any context (i.e. online or face to face), not all aspects of SP are a) intrinsically positive (frustration, anxiety, for example) b) positive in their impact on others in interaction. With respect to the latter, there may be a mismatch between the facilitative effects of any given aspect of SP for the individual and the way his/her SP is perceived by others. SP, as was discussed in Chapter 2, is at least in part, a subjective phenomenon.

Participants identified dominating interaction, aspects of self-disclosure, humour and silence as problematic. Dominating behaviour was perceived to impact negatively on shyer, less confident learners by impeding their participation. This finding is corroborated by some research, which has found that SP density (i.e. high degrees of SP) may hinder learning (Lee, 2014). In addition, Kear (2010, p.3) comments that ‘the behaviour and attitudes of the participants makes a significant contribution to the degree of social presence experienced’. Dominating is given as an example of negatively perceived behaviour by students.

However, I would argue that dominating is also an aspect of open communication in the interactive category. It may reduce an overall sense of SP by impacting negatively on group cohesion, as Kear (2010) states. Nevertheless, the perception of SP for the dominating individual may well be construed positively. What is positive for one learner, therefore, may be detrimental to other learners or to the group as a whole.

My research data also revealed that aspects of self-disclosure were perceived negatively by some participants. In the literature on SP, self-disclosure is viewed as a positive indicator of group cohesion and affective connectedness (Cortese & Seo, 2012; Satar, 2010; Yamada, 2009). Indeed, the facilitative aspects of self-disclosure, including the fostering of community-building and a sense of mutuality were discussed in relation to both interview and online data. Self-disclosure advanced the social aspects of communication, perceived by learners as intrinsic to communication in the TL.

However, data from my study also showed that self-disclosure may have a *negative* impact if perceived as inappropriate, i.e. sustained focus on irrelevant aspects or disclosure of information perceived as excessively intimate. Differences in degree of intimacy communicated in self-disclosure were also identified in the tutorial observations. In addition, self-disclosure was considered the least helpful SP indicator by questionnaire respondents. This indicates that SP indicators may need to be considered in terms of their different communicative impact, relative to specific online learning contexts.

Allied to communicative impact is communicative function, and across written spoken and iconic modes, SP indicators were demonstrated to perform multiple functions in online discourse, sometimes simultaneously (see Appendix 12). In terms of the communicative functions of SP indicators, a study by Anthony (2013) explored these in relation to humour.

Anthony (2013) reviewed the importance of humour in both online and face to face language learning literature. She identified seven facilitative roles played by



humour in language learning according to the research literature and explored learner and tutor perceptions of these roles in oral synchronous contexts. What she found was that humour seemed to facilitate online language learning by reducing stress, fostering learner engagement in spontaneous language production, increasing attention, increasing cultural awareness and developing SP.

When explored as an aspect of SP in my study, some of Anthony's findings were replicated, for example, humour was perceived by learners and observed in tutorials to have different functions, i.e. the development of cohesion and also the fostering of communicative language use and SP. However, humour was not always positively perceived in terms of its effects and this was related by respondents to possible misinterpretation. Notably, respondents showed a degree of reticence towards the communication of their individual humour through fear of misinterpretation in the absence of body language cues.

With respect to silence, I have included this aspect as an indicator of SP. Stickler et al. (2005) highlight that silence does not always mean lack of engagement. According to research participants, silence impacts on cohesion and open communication and is perceived negatively by participants who project negative motivations onto the silent learner. Whereas these reasons for silence were undoubtedly valid in some instances of anxiety or lack of confidence, silence may also have positive causes for the individual learner as well as a negative impact on group interaction. Aspects of SP, therefore, need to be considered not only with respect to their impact on communication within the group, but also in terms of their functions for the individual learner within interactive processes.

The communication of negative feelings by an individual learner was identified by interviewees as having a detrimental effect on other learners. Examples given were expressing irritation or anxiety. However, a negatively perceived SP may not necessarily result in a negative outcome for the individual or, indeed for the group. Much will depend on the nature of the expressed emotion and on the actions of the learner. Suffering in silence or taking negative action will not lead to positive effects on learning, at least in the moment. An example of negative agency (van Lier, 2008) was provided in my observation data by the student who acted on her feelings by abruptly leaving a tutorial (Extract 14, Chapter 6). However, positive self-regulation of negative emotion by the individual may be crucial in determining the consequence for learning (Rientes and Alden Rivers, 2014; Marchand & Gutierrez, 2012; Hauck and Hurd, 2005). I discuss self-regulation and agency further in Section 7.5.

Finally, research participants found the cohesive SP indicator of 'acknowledging presence', and the affective indicators of encouragement and praise, warmth and empathy to be unmitigatingly facilitative when learning a language in *IlluminateLive*. Acknowledging presence was identified by interview participants as significant, in the absence of visual cues in *IlluminateLive*, for the alleviation of anxiety and to mitigate against the anonymity of the environment. This finding reflects that of Satar (2015) who found that learners needed to feel that the other person was attending to them. However, the SP indicator of acknowledging presence was not valued by all participants to the same extent. The role of anonymity in inhibiting online language learners is well-documented in the literature (de los Arcos, Coleman and Hampel, 2006; Hampel and Stickler, 2005; Hampel, 2003). However, de los Arcos et al. (2006) also discuss research studies

which show that anonymity can impact positively on risk-taking and may be interpreted by some learners as liberating. Indeed, there was some evidence in the testimonies of interviewees that anonymity might also have a positive impact (in the case of shy students, for example) and could be used as a strategy to facilitate their interaction. These seemingly paradoxical findings testify to the importance of individual differences and to the different ways in which anonymity may be construed by the individual (de los Arcos et al., 2006).

The value of supportive SP (encouragement, praise, warmth and empathy) was also related to the alleviation of anxiety, to confidence-building and to the fostering of open communication. Supportive communication was unanimously valued by research participants. As Krish et al. (2012, p.202) state: 'learners are not just information processors but social beings who look for support and affirmation in their learning'.

## **7.4 The dynamic, varying nature of SP (RQs 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 2.1, 2.3)**

The findings of my study showed that SP fluctuates, varies and exists in degrees, based on a number of mediating factors, including participant interaction, individual differences, aspects of TP, the nature of tasks or activities and the technological environment.

Tutorial observations provided evidence of interaction between the three presences of the Col framework. Fluctuations in SP were therefore a necessary and inevitable consequence of the dynamic interplay between the presences and between the indicators of these presences. From a social constructivist perspective, new knowledge, i.e. language competence, was observed to develop

through and in social interaction (Su & Beaumont, 2010). However, as was discussed in the previous section, the nature of SP was also found to impact on LLP, according to learners. I therefore agree with Sherblom (2010) that SP may also be understood as a mediating variable in online language learning.

Evidence from tutorial observations emerged that the projection of affective aspects (humour, supportive communication) facilitated both further projection of these indicators (i.e. humour generated humour) and, *additionally* facilitated communication in the interactive and cohesive categories. SP was found to have a causal impact on the generation of SP within the same category of indicators (i.e. affective), but also to impact on the generation of SP in the other two categories (interactive, cohesive). Therefore SP was found to be both cause and effect. For this reason, I agree with Galley et al. (2014) that SP emerges in interaction and is actively co-constructed through interaction by participants; however, I would argue that, as a projected aspect of communication, SP also promotes interaction.

Aspects of the nature of SP identified by Kehrwald (2010) relate to its dynamic and cumulative aspects and to the fact that it exists in degrees. Participants in my study demonstrated awareness of these aspects and also reasons for them. With respect to the dynamic, fluctuating and cumulative nature of SP, reasons given related to context-specific factors (group dynamics and developing group dynamics, the nature of the task or activity, TP and TSP, the affordances of the environment, technology failures), and factors related to the individual (affective responses, personal circumstances, individual differences, including language level). My research therefore corroborates the findings of Kehrwald (2010) with respect to these aspects of dynamic interaction.

In addition, the projection of *degrees* of SP was also related by participants to differences in level of 'sociability', which implies that the nature of communication of some participants would be more openly sociable than that of others. This seemed to matter most with respect to the tutor, given that for interviewees, high degrees of SP, involving the use of explicit, dynamic communication strategies were valued online and in the absence of visible cues. Concomitantly, periods of silence of the tutor were perceived to be disconcerting and to provoke anxiety.

Variations in SP in my study were also found to be related to the nature of online tasks, given that meaning-focussed tasks foster higher degrees of SP than language activities (e.g. Chapter 5, section 5.5.3). This qualitative aspect of tasks is well-documented in the research literature (Ellis, 2003). However, less well-documented is the relationship between collaboration, SP and language learning. There was evidence of SP generated through collaboration in my findings. However, I also observed the projection of SP through collaboration related to tasks which were form-focussed. A possible hypothesis (to be explored through further research) may be that the quality of SP, generated through collaboration, is conducive to language learning and perhaps also that SP in collaboration makes language structures more salient. This notion relates back to my discussion of TSP in Section 7.2 of this chapter.

## **7.5 The impact of individual differences (RQ 2.2)**

Interviewees were aware of individual differences, not only in the projection of SP of other learners and the tutor but also in their perceptions of their individual SP and those factors which might impact on it (either related to personal circumstances, characteristics or responses in the moment). The findings of my

study corroborate those of Satar (2010) in relation to the importance of individual differences. However, whereas Satar's (2010) study found that individual differences rendered the projection of SP of individuals unpredictable, I suggest there may be some degree of predictability.

In the previous section I discussed the dynamic, varying nature of SP which is co-constructed by individuals in interaction. Patterns of reciprocity of projected SP were observed in the tutorial data and, in particular, the self-perpetuating nature of SP. Therefore, although individual variation may impact on the projection of SP, or on participation in any tutorial, SP will also mediate individual differences.

If as discussed in Chapter 2, participation may be seen as a fluid process, then participant identities may shift and evolve through interaction with others and also with the online environment (Galley et al. 2014; Hauck & Warnecke, 2013). This is a useful constructivist position which conceptualises SP as influenced by perceptions and projections of self and responses to these within a dynamic participatory process. Therefore, the attitudes and behaviours which characterise individual differences are not fixed.

In Chapter 2, I defined SP in terms of its social and affective 'purposes' and argued that it will be to some extent strategic, involving self-regulation. If self-regulation is equated with 'agency' (Ozdemir, 2011), and agency can be understood in terms of the capacity to act (van Lier, 2008), then the projection of SP may be viewed as self-regulation and agency. Therefore the distinction between self-regulation and manifestations of SP becomes blurred.

Of course, self-regulation as agency, will also manifest in online communication which can be categorised as TSP, LLP or TP. For Shea and Bidjerano (2012), self-regulation is 'learning presence' which they conceptualise as a significant fourth presence in the Col framework, involving self-regulatory cognitive, affective, motivational and behavioural components of the individual learner. Whether or not self-regulation may be conceptualised as a fourth presence, it is useful to view self-regulated activity as evidenced in projected online presence and impacted upon by presence. Indeed, the research findings of Shea and Bidjerano (2012) revealed that 'learning presence' is influenced by TP and SP and, I would add to this, by TSP. Within a constructivist framework, the manifestations of self-regulation in interaction will vary according to individual differences but self-regulation will also exist in degrees and will be co-constructed through collaboration with other learners and the tutor (Lantolf, 2006). This relates back to the argument made at the start of this section that individual differences will be mutable in interactive processes.

An example of positive self-regulation from my research was found in my discussion of Extract 1, Chapter 6. A student questioned his tutor about course content, and also expressed confusion. This triggered the reassuring SP of the tutor and another learner. The agency of the confused student was impacted upon by the agency of other participants and a process of transformation was evidenced in the resolution of a problem. Individual difference, in this case, was expressed through self-regulated activity and was found to be impacted upon by both TSP, TP and LSP.

## 7.6 The impact of ElluminateLive (RQs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3)

Rubin et al. (2013) call for the extension of the Col framework to include the effects of the software used to support and facilitate it. Scollon and Scollon (2003) also locate meaning-making within a given socio-cultural and material context. In Chapter 2, I posited that the materiality of the medium will influence the communicative potential of the varied (interacting) modes. This view is supported by the existence of multiple meaning-making devices (Lamy, 2012) and the ways in which they interrelate. Throughout this thesis I have argued that the online environment with its affordances is a primary mediating variable for the projection of SP and the different ways in which it is perceived by participants.

Lack of body language in *ElluminateLive* clearly impacted on ways in which the SP of others was perceived and interpreted by the individual. This was a key factor in a language learning context (a primary mediating variable, see Chapter 1, 1.4) in which SP was intrinsic to meaning-focussed communication. The absence of body language cues generated anxiety for most research participants (Chapter 5, section 5.6.1). Whereas this finding is supported by the research literature discussed in Chapter 2 (de los Arcos et al., 2009; Satar and Ozdener 2008; Hampel et al., 2005), what is perhaps not fully developed in this literature is the perceived negative impact on language development, as a consequence of lack of body language cues.

As discussed in section 7.1 of this chapter, the importance of SP is related to the alleviation of negative feelings in learners. However, paradoxically, the projection and interpretation of SP is impeded by the audiographic nature of the environment. This is perhaps particularly important in relation to communicative use of the TL



though the spoken mode, and, indeed, the importance of body language cues to support SLA (albeit in face to face contexts) is highlighted by researchers (e.g. Gregerson, 2007). To return to my central argument that the findings of my study need to be regarded as specific to audiographic contexts, in environments using videoconferencing, the potential difficulties of interpreting the SP of others, with a perceived concomitant impact on language development, may not be so acutely experienced by learners in such contexts.

My findings also revealed that the affordances and nature of multimodality impacted on the manner of communication of SP. For example, clicking on and off the microphone to speak, impacted on the fluidity of interaction; icons were appreciated for their immediacy, along with the text chat. However, icons were observed to perform various discourse functions and could therefore be used to replace spoken language. Indeed, some research participants considered icons to be reductive and to encourage polarised reactions. In a language learning context, the use of icons to replace spoken language may therefore have an inhibiting effect on language development via on or off-task social interaction.

Likewise there was evidence from interviewees that negative reactions to microphone limitations inhibited the use of this tool for some learners, with a possible negative impact on both SP and LLP. On the other hand, the environment afforded the possibility to mode switch and there was evidence from tutorial observations that participants switched to the text chat to compensate for microphone failures. Indeed, the affordances of the text chat were appreciated by research participants and the capacity of this resource to support LLP was evidenced in my research. Further research might fruitfully be undertaken into the

links between SP, LLP and the uses of specific tools in multimodal language learning contexts.

The ability to use the functionalities of *ElluminateLive* was recognised as a necessary aspect of 'participatory literacy' (Hauck and Warnecke, 2013, p.111) and research participants registered a) their frustration at the lack of skill of other participants which they perceived to impede the projection of SP and b) their awareness of varying degrees of skill in working within *ElluminateLive* according to the individual tutor. These aspects indicate a need for training of both tutors and learners and of learners by tutors. As Kehrwald (2010) states:

*'Notably, the abilities to both convey and read social presence in mediated interaction are learned skills. Novice online learners often do not come to online learning environments with the abilities to either project themselves as salient social actors or to read the social presence cues of other actors. They learn to do these things through interaction with more experienced learners, through seeing and experiencing how others project themselves into the environment, how others interact with one another and how others react to their personal efforts to cultivate a social presence'*

I would also argue that these skills are not just automatically acquired through observing others, but also need to be explicitly trained for and I observed the latter to varying degrees in the tutorial observations in the training of learners by tutors. However, training also perhaps needs to be sensitive to differences in learner attitudes to the use of tools to self-regulate. The data collected in this research indicated that learner perceptions of tools varied. For example, reticence in

individual use of emoticons and perceptions of the text chat to distract from language learning were elicited from learner perceptions.

To return briefly to social semiotic theory discussed in Chapter 2, it could be argued that social semiotics democratised communication theory by repositioning language as one of many meaning-making resources. However, for language learners, the primary focus is to be able to communicate using *language*. By placing language learning within a multimodal environment we are doing language learners a disservice if we do not provide adequate training in the use of tools to enable learners to project and sustain a positive SP for the purpose of language learning.

# **Chapter 8: Conclusions**

## **Introduction**

This chapter marks the conclusion of my thesis. In section 8.1, I return to my research questions and assess to what extent my findings have provided answers to them. In section 8.2, I discuss the relevance of my research to the fields of CMC and CMCL, whereas in section 8.3, I turn to the applicability of my findings to my professional practice. Sections 8.4 and 8.5 focus on the limitations of my study and recommendations for future research, respectively. I conclude this thesis in section 8.6.

## **8.1 The research findings in relation to my research questions**

My first research question focussed on learner perceptions of the nature and role of SP and the extent of its influence on LLP in online tutorials. Data from questionnaires and interviews provided a response to this question in terms of the importance attributed by learners to SP and their awareness of the positive and negative ways in which SP of both individual SP and that of others impacted upon LLP.

However, although there was some differentiation in the data between learner perceptions of the influence of their individual SP and that of other learners (in relation to SP indicators and use of tools) the findings for sub-questions 1.1 and 1.2 tended to merge, i.e. learners talked about the impact of LSP, in general. This is perhaps in line with tutorial observation findings which showed that SP is self-perpetuating and therefore co-constructed in interactive processes.

With respect to sub-question 1.3 my research findings revealed how learners construed the paramount importance of TSP, although this impact tended to be described in general terms, referring to both the individual learner and the group. The importance of the interconnection between TSP and TP was an additional finding, not specifically focussed upon in my research questions.

Findings related to RQ2, indicated that individual responses to and in the online medium influenced not only the projection of SP but also responses to the projection of SP of other participants. The mutability of individual responses was also demonstrated from the perceptions of learners and was found to be subject to participant interaction, TSP and TP, language learning tasks and activities and the agency of participants. The audiographic nature of the online environment, along with the affordances and limitations of the tools available for the projection of SP were also found to be key factors. Individual emotional factors, triggered by responses to the audiographic nature of the environment proved to be significant. The data collected in response to RQs 1 and 2 indicated that SP is subjective and there were individual variations in perceptions. However, the commonality of findings, demonstrated in the overarching themes and sub-themes also indicated patterns in learner perceptions.

Not all aspects of the perceptions of learners collected in response to RQs 1 and 2 could be observed in online tutorials. This is because these perceptions related, in part, to feelings which could only be accessed via interviews. However, the tutorial observations provided evidence of the impact of SP on LLP and validated learner perceptions to some extent. They also provided clear evidence of the pivotal role

of the tutor and extended learner perceptions by offering insight into the nature and role of SP in a specific online, socio-cultural and multimodal context.

In general, my research findings in relation to all three RQs were answered by the data I collected. However, whilst this data did not always provide substantial insight into specific aspects of the questions asked (i.e. perceptions of individual SP compared with the SP of other learners), it elicited additional information about online SP as it was perceived by learners in the context of *IlluminateLive* tutorials and also as perceived by myself as an observer of online language tutorials.

## **8.2 The relevance of my research to the fields of CMC and CMCL**

This study has extended current understanding of online SP, relevant to the fields of CMC and CMCL, by demonstrating that it is not always experienced as a positive phenomenon by learners. In addition, although the Col framework proved to be a useful methodological tool for analysing SP, I found that the categorisation (and separation) of dimensions and indicators of the 3 presences failed to capture the complex interdependence of aspects of SP in online discourse. The identification of distinct presences is therefore problematized and, although the original Col model represented the merging of presences, it did not sufficiently represent the fluidity of interaction between the presences and their categories and indicators.

In addition, my research has contributed to the field of CMC by presenting the findings of a SP study within an audiographic, synchronous multimodal environment and, to date, there is limited research on SP in such contexts. I would

argue that future SP research in CMC needs to systematically take account of the impact of multimodality on SP in bespoke online environments.

With my adaptation of the Col framework to include 'language learning presence', my study contributes to the field of CMCL and opens the door to future research, which may use this additional presence as a methodological tool with which to explore SP within online language learning contexts. In Figure 32, I presented an adapted version of the Col model, relevant to CMCL, and which has emerged from this thesis. This model may be adapted to represent online interaction in other synchronous contexts.

### **8.3 Implications and recommendations for professional practice**

The Open University relies heavily on both online communication and online learning, given its status as a major distance learning organisation. Within the Department of Languages, I am involved in course production, staff development and quality assurance. A focus of these activities is the integration of professional practice oriented towards student satisfaction and effective learning. The findings of my research demonstrate the relevance of SP to both these aspects in the context of online language learning.

I have delivered staff development activities, based on my amended version of the Col framework to raise awareness amongst Associate Lecturers of the importance of SP, its different aspects and potential impact on language learning. I have also co-operated with a colleague on action-based research involving the analysis of the impact of SP in audiographic, synchronous online contexts. In 2014, I

presented my research findings in Austria at the first international conference 'Matters of the Mind: Psychology and Language Learning', where its impact was demonstrated by positive audience feedback.

An on-going project at the Open University involves the training of student mentors in the use of social and affective communication strategies in order to provide effective asynchronous support for language students on level one courses. Informed by my research, I produced a manual for mentors in September 2016 which included training for SP, with practical examples of positive social and affective communication. The work of the student mentor project has attracted interest beyond the Faculty in the wider university. It is also now current policy in the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics that student mentors are an integral part of student support for first year university students.

An interesting aspect of training for SP is that it is perhaps facilitated in audiographic online environments in the absence of body language cues with their potential to send conflicting messages. My research has demonstrated the need for training for SP in synchronous media involving the use of multimodal resources and this training is needed not only for Associate Lecturers but also for students. I would suggest that initial training for students may highlight the social and affective use and impact of online tools as well as their technical functionalities. To this effect, I aim to write a manual for students, similar to that produced for student mentors, which can be distributed at module start and discussed as part of an induction programme, now offered to all Languages students at Level one.



## **8.4 Limitations of the study**

In this section, I discuss the limitations of my research in relation to theory and methodology.

### **8.4.1 Theoretical Level**

Perhaps the greatest limitation of this study lies in its emphasis on the complex aspects of SP at the expense of any in-depth focus on a given field of research in SLA. I therefore discuss, on a relatively superficial level, areas such as learner strategies, affect, collaboration, task-based language learning to name but a few. These are fields in which there is an established body of theory and research; however, I draw on ideas from them to the extent to which they elucidate my exploration of the nature and function of online SP. My study therefore opens many angles for future research, some of which I discuss in section 8.5.

In addition, I have argued throughout this thesis that SP needs to be studied within a specific subject area and in a bespoke online environment. This is a strength but also a limitation, given that caution must be taken in generalising or transferring some of its findings to other contexts. Indeed ‘transferability’ (Bryman, 2008, p.272) is a recognised issue in qualitative research. For example, as discussed in Chapter 7, the need for learners to feel comfortable in audiographic, synchronous language learning contexts may not be felt so acutely in other subject areas using video conferencing tools. Having said this, my findings have resonance beyond this study in some key areas, which were discussed in section 8.2.

### **8.4.2 Methodological level**

My revised version of the Col framework for the analysis of SP in online language learning must be viewed as a rough tool, needing further refinement. Language learning presence is a new construct and, as such, needs to be developed and tested in future studies in CMCL. Equally, my understanding of teaching presence, adapted for language learning contexts, perhaps requires further development.

The methods for data collection were appropriate in that they provided answers to my research questions. However, the relatively small number of questionnaires collected meant that the data must be viewed with caution. The findings of quantitative data were not statistically significant and my identification of themes was based on small numbers of similar responses. A greater number of questionnaire responses may have opened more avenues for exploration in the follow-up interviews or afforded greater insight into the initial themes and patterns emerging from the survey data.

The questionnaire was also too long and complex and perhaps placed excessive demands on respondents in terms of both time needed to complete it and the level of cognitive engagement required in order to answer some of the questions. A more fruitful approach, for instance, would have been to identify examples of the 'social participation' of other learners and the tutor and to ask respondents to rate these in terms of their importance or significance.

Earlier in this thesis, I have discussed problems associated with the mode of distribution of the questionnaire, which depended upon the good will of tutor 'gatekeepers' and also on students accessing the questionnaire via their tutor

group forum. A more efficient method of distribution would have been to use the Open University's central Information Technology services to send out the questionnaire electronically to all identified participants, with the option of periodic reminders for completion. Such a course of action may have led to an increased response rate.

With respect to the interviews, I had originally intended to adopt an ethnographic approach, focussed on collecting the perceptions of interview respondents and then observing these same interview respondents during tutorial observations across a number of tutorials over time. This proved to be difficult owing to organisational constraints. The consequence was that there was limited scope for triangulation via tutorial observations of learner perceptions of their individual differences in relation to SP.

Capturing multimodal interaction using the transcription method I adopted proved to be challenging in this thesis and has to be cited as a limitation of my study. In the absence of clear protocols for multimodal transcription, I found the process time-consuming and complex.

In terms of the analysis of multimodal data, this was also fraught with pitfalls. Identifying the boundaries of the three presences, based on assumed purpose of interaction, was not clear-cut. In sum, I felt that my attempts at analysis may not have highlighted all the meanings associated with SP in sequences of multimodal interaction. I therefore found the use of inter-rater checks (Silverman, 2010) to be an essential part of my analysis as discussions with raters helped to assure the reliability of my interpretations.

Finally, I have discussed some of the limitations of my study in this section; others have been discussed elsewhere in this thesis. There are, no doubt, further limitations, which will become apparent to the reader.

## **8.5 Recommendations for future research**

As previously stated, LLP is a new construct and, as such, needs to be developed and tested in future studies in CMCL. My understanding of this construct is that it encompasses both the (interrelated) interactive and cognitive aspects of language learning, i.e. interacting in and through the TL and learning about the target language. Future research studies may fruitfully explore how SP might impact on cognition and interaction and what the nature of such impact might prove to be. This is a complex area which strikes at the heart of how languages may be learnt in online environments.

With respect to the role of the tutor, my study has confirmed the importance for learners of feeling comfortable when learning languages online and the perceived impact this has on both interaction in the TL and cognition and the interplay between the two, i.e. interviewees commented that they would interact more fully when they felt comfortable and also that feeling comfortable helped them to learn. There was also evidence from the interviewees that TSP might have a more direct impact on cognition by making instructed content more salient to learners. Clearly more research could be undertaken into the various manifestations of TSP and their impact on LLP from both the student *and* tutor perspective and at different levels. If SP is an intrinsic aspect of meaning-focussed interaction in the TL, it is possible that aspects of TSP may be less important (and necessary) at higher levels when interaction tends to be more meaning-focussed and when *most*

interaction takes place in the TL from learner to learner(s) and from tutor to learner(s).

My research has demonstrated the importance of TSP but also highlighted the fact that it has not been systematically explored as a separate construct to LSP. A useful next step will be to develop a SP scheme specific to TSP which may then be employed to investigate the impact of TSP on LLP at different levels. This scheme could be developed on the basis of further tutorial observations focussed on TSP, and also, perhaps via interviews with tutors. The latter, along with additional student interviews, would also provide insight into the perceived impact of aspects of TSP on LLP from the tutor and student perspectives.

Finally (although the ideas in this list are indicative and not exclusive), the socio-cultural notion of collaboration in online settings can also be usefully explored in relation to LSP. Current research emphasises that not all collaboration is necessarily conducive to language development but that collaboration arising from meaning-focussed, goal-oriented tasks is more likely to trigger language development. However, a possible research hypothesis may be that it is the quality of LSP generated through collaboration which is conducive to language learning, rather than the meaning-focussed nature of any given task. For example, collaboration of a problem-solving nature which is generated by form-focussed tasks, may lead to language development, depending on the quality of SP communicated.

## 8.6 Conclusion

In this thesis I have explored the nature and role of SP in audiographic synchronous online language learning contexts. The principle finding of my study is that SP plays a significant role in supporting and facilitating online SLA. It is also an essential means through which LLP is developed. When viewed as a separate construct from LSP, the role of TSP is paramount in relation to its interaction with TP and impact on both LSP and LLP.

LSP both mediates and is mediated by the nature of the other interacting online presences. However, as I have argued throughout this thesis, all online interaction is mediated by what I view as the two primary variables of subject matter and the nature of the multimodal environment. Educators need to keep this in focus when providing training for learners and tutors and, I would argue, start from the learner perspective rather than focusing uniquely on the use of online tools. To this extent, awareness-raising of the importance of the social and affective aspects of studying online languages should perhaps be placed at the heart of training programmes, alongside practical guidance in the use of socio-affective discourse strategies.

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## Appendix 1 Questionnaire

This questionnaire is about **social presence**. In language tutorials, you do tasks, exercises and activities which are focussed on **language learning**. Many of these tasks, exercises and activities may involve social participation **for the purposes of language learning**. For example, you might exchange personal information, express opinions, talk about your holidays or discuss culture or politics. **However**, beyond the strict remit of the activity, you might **also** express your personality through additional social participation with other learners and the tutor. This social participation or 'social presence' is the subject of my research. I am interested in how you view your own social presence and that of other learners and the tutor.

Social presence might vary in its nature. For example, you might make jokes, exchange personal information with others or support and encourage them. Alternatively, you might express doubts or anxieties or your dislike of an activity. There are numerous ways in which you can express social presence online by using the tools of the environment. For example, you can use the emoticons, the text chat, the audio facility, your webcam or even add things to the white board. Sometimes you might choose to express your social presence in English but at other times you might use the language you are studying.

## **Section One**

**This section is about you. Please underline/highlight your chosen response(s) to each question**

**1. What language module(s) are you studying at the OU?**

.....

**2. Is this your first experience of language studies at the OU?**

**Yes                      No**

**3. What is your age group?**

**a) 18-25**

**b) 26-40**

**c) 41-55**

**d) Over 55**

**4. Are you male or female?**

**Female                      Male**

**5. What is your nationality?**

.....

**6. What is your first language?**

.....

## **Section Two**

**This section is about your use of technology and experience of online language tutorials. Please underline/highlight your chosen response(s) to each question**

**1. How experienced are you in the use of computers and computer software?**

**a) very experienced**

**b) experienced**

**c) quite experienced (I can do the basics such as emails and word processing and I use the internet)**

**d) not experienced**

**2. Which of the following have you used? Select *any* you are experienced in using.**

**a) Skype**

**b) Elluminate**

**c) Flash meeting**

**d) Facebook**

**f) Other? Please specify:**

.....



**3. How regularly do you attend online tutorials?**

- a) I attend every tutorial**
- b) I attend when I have the time**
- c) I've only just started to attend but aim to continue**
- d) I've attended one session but won't continue**
- e) I never attend**

**4. In general, how would you rate online tutorials as a space for language learning? If possible, please comment to explain your chosen response.**

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Very good</b>	
<b>Good</b>	
<b>OK</b>	
<b>Poor</b>	

**Please answer the following sections 3-5 *only* if you attend online tutorials.**

### **Section Three**

**This section is about how you feel about yourself when you participate socially with members of your tutor group during online tutorials (i.e. before, during, after and between activities). Please underline/highlight your chosen response(s) to each question**

**1. How important is it for you to participate socially in the group in order to learn and practise the language? If possible, please comment to explain your chosen response.**

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Very important</b>	
<b>Important</b>	
<b>Quite important</b>	
<b>Not very important</b>	
<b>Not important</b>	
<b>It depends....</b>	

2. Which of the following statements describe the way you feel about using the online tools? Select any that apply to you.

a) I feel confident about using the tools to participate socially in the group

b) I feel more confident with some of the tools than others when participating socially in the group.

c) I feel that some people are much better than me at using the tools to participate socially.

d) I feel that everyone is much better than me at using the tools to participate socially.

3. Which tools do you feel *most* comfortable using socially and why? For example, text chat, emoticons, hands-up, ticks/crosses, audio facility etc.

.....  
.....  
.....

4. Which tools do you feel *least* comfortable using socially and why?

.....  
.....  
.....

**5. Think about your own social participation in online tutorials and select (highlight or underline) the statement that best applies to you.**

**a) I participate a lot using the online tools and like to signal my social presence.**

**b) I tend to focus on completing the language task or exercise and tend not to participate socially much beyond that.**

**c) I pay attention to the social participation of others although I don't contribute more than I have to socially.**

**6. What does social participation depend on for you? Select (highlight or underline) the factors that best apply to you. If possible, please comment to explain your chosen response.**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>My personality</b>	
<b>How I am feeling during the tutorial</b>	
<b>My level of fluency in the target language</b>	
<b>My level of familiarity with the tools of the environment</b>	
<b>My feelings about online language learning</b>	
<b>Group dynamics</b>	
<b>The nature of the tasks and activities</b>	
<b>Other? Please state</b>	

7. Have you ever noticed *any* fluctuations in your social participation within the group in online tutorials either within a particular session or over several sessions? For example, the degree or nature of this participation may vary.

**N.B.** *This question is not about variations due to technical problems but rather about your interaction with the group.*

Yes                      No

8. If yes, please give (an) example(s).

.....

.....

.....

9. Have these fluctuations had any effect on your ability to learn and practise the language?

Yes                      No

#### Section Four

This section is about how you feel about the social participation of other learners in online tutorials. Please underline/highlight your chosen response(s) to each question.

1. How important (in either positive or negative ways) is the social participation of other learners for your ability to learn and practise the language? If possible, please comment to explain your chosen response.

Rating	Comment
Very important	
Important	
Quite important	
Not very important	
Not important	
It depends....	

2. Does being able to hear but not see other learners affect your ability to learn and practise the language:

Rating	Comment
Negatively?	
Positively?	
not at all?	

If possible, please comment to explain your chosen response in the table above.

3. What aspects of the social participation of other learners do you find *particularly* helpful or unhelpful when learning and practising the language? Type Y (yes) or N (no) next to the aspect(s) you select in the list below. If possible, please comment to explain *any* of your chosen responses.

Aspect	Helpful? Y/N	Comment
Humour		
Disclosure of personal information		
Disclosure of feelings		
Empathy		
Praise		
Encouragement		
Advice		
Other? Please state		

**4. Think about how other learners use the tools of the environment for social participation. Can you give an example of when this is helpful to you when learning the language?**

.....  
.....  
.....

**5. Think about how other learners use the tools of the environment for social participation. Can you give an example of when this is unhelpful to you when learning the language?**

.....  
.....  
.....

**6. Have you ever noticed any fluctuations in the social participation of other students in the group in online tutorials either within a particular session or over several sessions? For example, the degree or nature of this participation may vary.**

***N.B. This question is not about variations due to technical problems but rather about interaction with the group.***

Yes                      No

7. If yes, please give an example.

.....

.....

.....

8. If yes, have these fluctuations had any effect on your ability to learn and practise the language?

Yes                      No



## **Section Five**

This section is about how you feel about the social participation of the tutor in online tutorials. Please underline/highlight your chosen response(s) to each question.

*(Please note you are not asked to judge your tutor's teaching)*

1. How important (in either positive or negative ways) is the social participation of the tutor for your ability to learn and practise the language? If possible, please comment to explain your chosen response.

Rating	Comment
Very important	
Important	
Quite important	
Not very important	
Not important	
It depends....	

2. Does being able to hear but not see your tutor affect your ability to learn and practise the language:

Rating	Comment
Negatively?	
Positively?	
not at all?	

If possible, please comment to explain your chosen response in the table above.

3. What aspects of the social participation of your tutor do you find *particularly* helpful or unhelpful when learning the language? Type Y (yes) or N (no) next to the aspect(s) you select in the list below. If possible, please comment to explain *any* chosen responses.

Aspect	Helpful? Y/N	Comment
Humour		
Disclosure of personal information		
Disclosure of feelings		
Empathy		
Praise		
Encouragement		
Advice		
Other? Please state		

4. Think about how your tutor uses the tools of the environment for social participation. What aspects of their use of these tools have you found *helpful* when learning the language?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

5. Think about how your tutor uses the tools of the environment for social participation. What aspects of their use of these tools have you found *unhelpful* when learning the language?

.....  
 .....

6. Have you ever noticed *any* fluctuations in the social participation of your tutor in the group in online tutorials either within a particular session or over several sessions? For example, the degree or nature of this participation may vary.

**N.B.** *This question is not about variations due to technical problems but rather about interaction with the group.*

Yes                      No

7. If yes, please give an example.

.....

.....

.....

8. If yes, have these fluctuation had *any* effect on *your* ability to learn and practise the language?

Yes                      No

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire.

Please return by email to [jo.fayram@open.ac.uk](mailto:jo.fayram@open.ac.uk)

## Appendix 2 Consent form (students)

The Faculty of Education and Language Studies, The Open University

### Title of Project:

***The nature and role of social presence in audiographic, synchronous online language learning contexts***

This research project involves gathering views from students about social presence in online language tutorials and how they perceive the social presence of other students and the tutor. It also involves the observation by the researcher of some recorded tutorials to see how social presence seems to impact on language learning.

If you are **willing** to take part in this research project please tick the first box, sign and date the form and return it by email. At any time during the research you are free to withdraw your consent to participate without any adverse consequences to yourself. You can also request the destruction of any data that have been gathered from you within two weeks of its receipt by the researcher.

If you are **unwilling** for the researcher to observe recorded online language tutorials, please tick the second box, sign and date the form and return it by email. Please note that the researcher must receive notification of this (by receipt of this consent form) by August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013.

The results of this research project constitute personal data and will be kept secure and not released to any third party.

☒ I am willing to take part in this research, and I give my permission for the data collected to be used in an anonymous form in any written reports, presentations and published papers relating to this study. I understand that my confidentiality will be respected as specified in the covering letter.

☐ I am unwilling for the researcher to observe any recorded online language tutorials in which I have participated. I am also unwilling for any data from these recorded language tutorials to be used in the research project to which this consent form pertains.

Signing this form indicates that you understand the purpose of the research and the conditions under which it will be carried out, as explained in the covering letter.

Please do not hesitate to contact me via email at the address below if you require any further information or decide to withdraw consent for your data to be used.

If you are unsatisfied with any aspect of the way this project is conducted, you can contact:

- a) the Associate Dean (Research) at: [cecilia.garrido@open.ac.uk](mailto:cecilia.garrido@open.ac.uk)
- b) the principal supervisor for this project at: [marie-noelle.lamy@open.ac.uk](mailto:marie-noelle.lamy@open.ac.uk)

**Signed (electronically):**

**Date:**

**Please email the signed form to: [jo.fayram@open.ac.uk](mailto:jo.fayram@open.ac.uk)**

## Appendix 3 Consent form (tutors)

The Faculty of Education and Language Studies, The Open University

### Title of Project:

***The nature and role of social presence in audiographic, synchronous online language learning contexts***

This research project involves gathering views from students about how they feel about social presence in online language tutorials and how they perceive the social presence of other students and the tutor. It also involves the observation by the researcher of some recorded tutorials to see how social presence seems to impact on language learning.

If you are willing to take part in this research project please tick the box, sign and date the form and return it by email. At any time during the research you are free to withdraw your consent to participate without any adverse consequences to yourself. You can also request the destruction of any data that have been gathered from you within two weeks of its receipt by the researcher.

The results of this research project constitute personal data and will be kept secure and not released to any third party.

☐ I am willing to take part in this research, and I give my permission for the data collected to be used in an anonymous form in any written reports, presentations and published papers relating to this study. I understand that my confidentiality will be respected as specified in the covering letter.

Signing this form indicates that you understand the purpose of the research and the conditions under which it will be carried out, as explained in the covering letter.

Please do not hesitate to contact me via email at the address below if you require any further information or decide to withdraw consent for your data to be used.

If you are unsatisfied with any aspect of the way this project is conducted, you can contact:

- a) the Associate Dean (Research) at: [cecilia.garrido@open.ac.uk](mailto:cecilia.garrido@open.ac.uk)
- b) the principal supervisor for this project at: [marie-noelle.lamy@open.ac.uk](mailto:marie-noelle.lamy@open.ac.uk)

**Signed (electronically):** .....

**Date:** .....

**Please email the signed form to:** [jo.fayram@open.ac.uk](mailto:jo.fayram@open.ac.uk)

## Appendix 4 Information letter for student participants

Dear Participant

I am an EdD student at the Open University and I am doing research into student perceptions of social presence in online tutorials. My research aims to gather views from students about how they feel about communicating online and how they perceive the presence of other students and the tutor. I am particularly interested in how this impacts on language learning.

My research will involve collecting views through questionnaires and interviews. I would also like to record some observed *IlluminateLive* sessions and analyse the interaction.

By agreeing to participate in this research project you are not obliged to be involved in all its aspects. If you do participate, your anonymity and confidentiality will be respected. Your name will be removed from all data, and interviews will take place in a private space, uninterrupted by others.

It is anticipated that the questionnaire should take about 15 minutes of your time to complete. Interviews should take around 30 minutes.

Participation in this research will contribute to understanding about language learning online. It is envisaged that it will enhance the learning experience of current and future students in this field.

If you decide to participate in this research, you have the right to withdraw your participation at any time without any adverse consequences to yourself. Any data collected is subject to the Data Protection Act. It is stored securely and will not be released to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party. It will be destroyed after a year or if you decide to withdraw from the project, up until the point at which data is aggregated for analysis (approximately two weeks after data collection). For further information, please contact me:

Jo Fayram

[j.fayram@open.ac.uk](mailto:j.fayram@open.ac.uk)

Thank you very much.

## Appendix 5 Information letter for tutor participants

Dear Participant

I am an EdD student at the Open University and I am doing research into social presence in online language tutorials. My research aims to gather views from students about how they feel about communicating online and how they perceive the presence of other students and the tutor. I am particularly interested in how this impacts on language learning.

My research will involve collecting student views through questionnaires and interviews. I would also like to observe recorded online tutorials and to analyse the interaction. If you agree to participate in this research project, your involvement will entail giving consent to the observation of recorded tutorials. Student participation in the project will include reflection on aspects of your interaction in these tutorials *with respect to social presence*. You will not be judged on your professional performance. Copies of the (uncompleted) questionnaire for students will be made available to you. These questionnaires will form the basis of further exploration through interviews with students.

Your anonymity will be respected at all times. Your name will be removed from data pertaining to your tutorials. In addition, you have the right to withdraw consent to participate at any time without any adverse consequences to yourself. Any data collected is subject to the Data Protection Act. It is stored securely and will not be released to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party. It will be destroyed after a year or if you decide to withdraw from the project, prior to the point at which data is aggregated for analysis (approximately two weeks after data collection). For further information, please contact me:

Jo Fayram

[jo.fayram@open.ac.uk](mailto:jo.fayram@open.ac.uk)

Thank you very much.



## Appendix 6 Confidentiality agreement

### Confidentiality Agreement

#### Transcriptionist

I, \_\_\_\_\_ transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audio-recorded interviews and documentations received from (Jo Fayram) related to her research study on the researcher study entitled (The nature and role of Social Presence in audiographic, synchronous online language learning contexts). Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of recorded interviews, or in any associated documents.
2. To not make copies of any sound files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by the researcher, (Jo Fayram).
3. To store all study-related materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession.
4. To delete all electronic files containing study-related sound files or documents from my computer hard drive and any back-up devices.

Transcriber's name (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_

Transcriber's signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 7 Number of questionnaire respondents by language and level

Module	Number of questionnaires
Beginners French	2
Beginners German	2
Beginners Spanish	1
Beginners French and Beginners German	1
Beginners German and Beginners Spanish	1
Beginners Chinese	2
Beginners Spanish and Intermediate Spanish	1
Intermediate Spanish	2
Intermediate Italian and Intermediate French	1
Upper-intermediate French	1
Upper-intermediate Spanish	2
Advanced French	2
Advanced Spanish	1
Advanced German	1

## Appendix 8 Interview participants, language (s) studied and interview medium

Interview participants	Gender	Age	Language and module studied	Medium
1	Female	Over 55	Beginners German	Skype
2	Male	26-40	Beginners German and Spanish	Skype
3	Female	41-55	Beginners German	Telephone
4	Female	26-40	Upper-intermediate French	<i>IlluminateLive</i>
5	Female	Over 55	Advanced Spanish	<i>IlluminateLive</i>
6	Male	Over 55	Upper-intermediate Spanish	Telephone
7	Female	Over 55		Telephone
8	Female	26-40	Beginners Chinese	<i>IlluminateLive</i>
9	Female	41-55	Intermediate Spanish	<i>IlluminateLive</i>

## Appendix 9 Tutorial observations

Language observed	Level	Tutor	Male	Female	No of participants/tutorial	Stage of module
French	Beginners	A		x	9	Start
French	Beginners	A		x	6	Middle
French	Intermediate	B	x		6	Start
French	Advanced	B	x		5	Middle
French	Advanced	B	x		6	End
Italian	Beginners	C		x	5	Start
Italian	Beginners	C		x	3	Middle
German	Beginners	D		x	4	Start
German	Beginners	D		x	3	Middle
German	Intermediate	E		x	6	Middle
Spanish	Beginners	F	x		6	Middle
Spanish	Intermediate	G		x	8	Start
Spanish	Advanced	H	x		7	Start

## Appendix 10 Transcription conventions (from Silverman, 2010)

- [ Brackets indicate overlapping interaction
- (0.4) Numbers in parenthesis indicate elapsed time in silence in tenths of a second.
- (.) A dot in parenthesis indicates a tiny gap, probably no more than one- tenth of a second.
- ? Rising vocal pitch
- WORD Capitals, except at the beginnings of lines, indicate especially loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk.
- ( ) Empty parentheses indicate the transcriber's inability to hear what was said.
- (word) Parenthesized words are possible hearings.
- (( )) Double parentheses contain author's descriptions rather than transcriptions.

## Appendix 11 Abbreviations used in transcribed extracts

Abbreviation	Meaning
S, S2, S3...	1st, 2nd, 3rd student etc in each interactive sequence
TC	Text chat
Audio	Audio facility
WB	Whiteboard
PW	Participants' window
Arrive/depart	The arrival/departure of participants
T	Turn (sequential turn of interaction)

## Appendix 12 Key to tutorial extracts

T	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1	LLP	Talk about course content	Seeking clarification
	SP	Affective	Expressing confusion
2,4	TP	Advice/explanation about course	Advising and explaining about course content
2	SP	Cohesive	Acknowledging others
		Affective	Reassuring
3	SP	Affective	Self-disclosing; expressing appreciation
		Management of the multimodal environment	Smiley (affective/happy feeling/ feeling relieved)
4	SP	Affective	Reassuring
4	TP/ SP	Facilitation	Communicating freely in the TL
		Affective	Reassuring
5	SP	Affective	Reassuring
6	SP	Interactive	Communicating freely with others/expressing positive feelings
		Managing the multimodal environment	Smiley (affective/happy feeling)

### Extract 1

T	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1,5	TP/ SP	Facilitation of language teaching	Using questioning techniques
		Interactive	Communicating freely
2,4,6	LLP/ SP	Interaction for the purpose of language learning	Communicating freely
		Interactive	Communicating freely
3	TP/ SP	Facilitative of language teaching	Communicating freely in the TL
		Affective	Expressing approval
7	TP	Language teaching	Correcting errors

### Extract 2

T	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1	SP/ TP	Cohesive	Greeting
		Facilitation of language teaching	Communicating freely in the TL
2	SP/ LLP	Cohesive	Responding to greetings
		Interaction for the purpose of language learning	Responding to others
4,6,8	SP/ LLP	Interactive/affective	Communicating freely/expressing humour
		Interaction for the purpose of language learning	Responding to others
3, 7	SP/ TP	Cohesive	Taking an interest in others
		Facilitation of language teaching	Using questioning techniques
5	SP/ TP	Interactive	Communicating freely
		Facilitation of language teaching	Communicating freely in the TL
9	TP	Language teaching	Presenting aspects of language

**Extract 3**

T	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1	SP/ TP	Affective/Cohesive	Giving praise/using vocatives
		Facilitation of language learning	Communicating freely in the TL
1	SP	Affective	Expressing humour
2, 3	SP	Management of the multimodal environment	Clapping (affective/praise)
4, 5	SP/ LLP	Affective	Giving praise
		Interaction for the purpose of language learning	Communicating freely

**Extract 4**



T	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1	TP/	Facilitation of language learning	Communicating freely in the TL
	SP	Cohesive	Greeting
2,3,4 6,7	TP	Management of the multimodal environment	Facilitating use of tools
4	TP/	Facilitation of language learning	Communicating freely in the TL
	SP	Affective	Self-disclosing
4	SP	Affective	Self-disclosing
4/5	LLP	Management of the multimodal environment	Answering questions about technology
6	SP	Affective	Self-disclosing/expressing humour

**Extract 5**

T	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1	TP	Management of the multimodal environment	Facilitating use of tools
2	SP	Cohesive/Management of the multimodal environment	Smiley (cohesive/acknowledging others)
3	SP/	Affective	Giving praise
	TP	Facilitation of language learning	Communicating openly in the TL

**Extract 6**

T	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1	SP	Cohesive	Asking how others feel
2	SP	Management of the multimodal environment	Tick (affective/expressing positive feelings)
3, 6	TP	Facilitation of language learning	Setting up activity
4,6	SP	Affective	Expressing humour
5	SP	Management of the multimodal environment	Smiley (affective/expressing humour)

**Extract 7**

T	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1	SP	Affective	Expressing feelings
2, 3	SP	Affective	Expressing humour
3	SP	Interactive	Communicating freely with others

**Extract 8**

T	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1, 3	SP	Affective	Self-disclosing
2	SP/ LLP	Affective	Self-disclosing
		Interaction for the purpose of language learning	Communicating freely

**Extract 9**

T (s)	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1	TP	Facilitation of language learning	Using questioning techniques
2	SP/ LLP	Affective	Self-disclosing
		Interaction for the purpose of language learning	Communicating freely
2/5	SP	Management of the multimodal environment	Smiley (affective/expressing humour)
3	SP	Affective	Expressing humour
3	SP/ TP	Affective	Expressing humour
		Facilitation of language learning	Communicating openly in the TL
4	LLP	Interaction for the purpose of language learning	Answering questions
6	TP	Language teaching	Giving feedback

**Extract 10**

T	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1-28	SP/ LLP	Interactive	Communicating freely (dominating)
		Interaction for the purpose of language learning	Communicating freely (dominating)

**Extract 11**

T	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1, 2	SP/ LLP	Interactive	Communicating freely
		Interaction for the purpose of language learning	Communicating freely

**Extract 12**

T	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1	LLP	Interaction for the purpose of language learning	Asking questions
2, 3	LLP	Interaction for the purpose of language learning	Seeking and responding to requests for clarification
4	LLP	Interaction for the purpose of language learning	Asking and answering questions
4, 6	LLP/ SP	Interaction for the purpose of language learning	Communicating freely
		Interactive	Communicating freely with others
5	TP	Facilitation of language learning	Using questioning techniques

**Extract 13**

T (s)	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1	TP	Language teaching	Eliciting feedback
2	LLP	Management of the multimodal environment	Cross (using the tools for language learning purposes/answering questions)
3	SP	Affective	Self-disclosing
4	SP	Affective	Expressing empathy

**Extract 14**

T (s)	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1	TP	Facilitation of language learning	Setting up activities
1	SP	Cohesive	Building inclusive relationships

**Extract 15**

T	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1	SP/	Affective/cohesive	Giving praise; building inclusive relationships
	TP	Facilitation of language teaching	Communicating freely

**Extract 16**

T	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1, 3	TP	Facilitation of language learning	Using questioning techniques and answering questions
2	LLP	Interaction for the purpose of language learning	Seeking clarification
4	LLP	Engagement in pedagogical activity	Doing vocabulary activity
5	TP	Language teaching	Giving feedback

**Extract 17**

Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
TP	Language teaching	Giving feedback
TP	Language teaching	Giving feedback
TP	Language teaching	Giving feedback
LLP	Management of the multimodal environment	Registering problems
LLP	Managing the multimodal environment	Registering problems

**Extract 18**

T	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1, 2	SP/ LLP	Interactive	Communicating freely
		Interaction for the purposes of language learning	Communicating freely
3, 4, 6	SP/ LLP	Interactive/affective	Communicating freely; expressing humour
		Interaction for the purposes of language learning	Communicating freely
5, 7	SP	Management of the multimodal environment	Drawing on whiteboard (affective/expressing humour)

**Extract 19**

T	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1	LLP	Interaction for the purposes of language learning	Seeking clarification
1	SP	Affective	Expressing confusion; expressing humour
2	LLP	Interaction for the purposes of language learning	Suggesting
3	SP	Affective	Asking for support
4	LLP	Interaction for the purposes of language learning	Suggesting
5	LLP	Interaction for the purposes of language learning	Answering questions
5	SP	Affective	Expressing confusion
6, 8	TP/ SP	Management of the multimodal environment	Using the tools for teaching purposes (frowny face, giving feedback)
		Management of the multimodal environment	Smiley/frowny face (affective/showing feelings)
8	SP	Management of the multimodal environment	clapping icon (affective/giving praise)
9	SP	Affective	Self-disclosing; expressing confusion
10	SP	Interactive	Communicating freely

**Extract 20**

T	Presence	Dimension/Category	Indicator
1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9	LLP/ SP	Interaction in the TL	Communicating freely
		Interactive	Communicating freely
4	LLP	Interaction for the purpose of language learning	Seeking clarification
5	TP	Language teaching	Correcting errors
6	LLP	Interaction for the purposes of language learning	Seeking clarification
7	TP	Language teaching	Answering questions
8	SP	Affective	Expressing humour

**Extract 21**